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President: Mr. Essy (Côte d'Ivoire)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 89

Environment and sustainable development

- (d) Elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/477)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the reports of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (A/49/84, Add.1, Add.2)

The President (*interpretation from French*):

Members will recall that at its 30th plenary meeting, held on 13 October 1994, the Assembly decided to hold the debate on this sub-item of agenda item 89 directly in plenary meeting, on the understanding that action on the sub-item would be taken in the Second Committee.

In connection with this sub-item, the Assembly has before it the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa: implementation of resolution 48/191 and possible requirements for future work (A/49/477), and a series of notes by the Secretary-General transmitting the reports of the Intergovernmental

Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, on its third, fourth and fifth sessions (A/49/84 and Add.1 and 2).

The prosperity of future generations in a world where ecological balances will finally be protected was a central concern at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. Among the conclusions drawn and recommendations made in Rio, one in particular has riveted the attention of the international community: the recommendation in chapter 12 of Agenda 21 on the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification. The importance and the uniqueness of that recommendation lie in the nature of the instrument envisaged for its implementation.

In fact, the preparatory process for the Rio Summit was enriched by the concomitant negotiation of two extremely important Conventions: the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. Those two Conventions now constitute the international standard for what has come to be known as the new generation of environmental conventions.

The United Nations Convention to combat desertification falls within the framework of the follow-up to and implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and is strengthened by the

principle of sustainable development. This instrument is a commitment in the form of a conventional commitment agreed on by the international community with the aim of creating an appropriate legal framework to promote and implement the principle of sustainable development in fragile ecosystems. Of course, the question of desertification and its negative effects on the development efforts of countries that are seriously affected by it is not a subject new to the United Nations system. However, so far the approach, the operational framework and the institutional mechanisms used have not yielded results commensurate with the scourge. Hence, we all hope that this innovative approach inspired by the Rio consensus will live up to the hopes placed in it by the deprived populations of arid areas.

It is fitting to hail here the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, which has successfully discharged the mandate entrusted to it in resolution 47/188 by adopting the Convention within the allotted time. We now need to ensure that all the desired conditions will be established for the effective implementation of this instrument.

We trust that the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, within the framework of its interim mandate and in the Conference of the Parties, will set up a financial mechanism and make viable institutional arrangements like those relating to the Conventions on climate change and biodiversity.

However, the importance of this Convention is also reflected in its subject matter and its scope of application and intervention. Almost 900 million individuals are developed and developing. In Africa alone, over the course of barely 50 years areas the size of countries have been affected by desertification. Even today, hundreds of thousand of hectares of fertile land are being inexorably lost because of desertification, which has intensified serious food shortages, encouraged migratory movements and exacerbated political tensions.

These problems, closely linked to the process of desertification, take on an even more tragic dimension in Africa. Indeed, the international community has been aware of this fact, since it has specifically emphasized Africa in the negotiating process. Furthermore, following the adoption of this Convention, the principle of urgent action for Africa was decided on. This urgent action, which highlights the priority given to Africa, must be implemented during the interim period preceding the Convention's entry into force. In this regard, we must

welcome the innovative approaches contained in the Convention — namely, the “bottom-up” approach, in which all those involved in combating desertification are clearly associated with partnership agreements for the implementation of programmes of action at the national, subregional and regional levels.

I am pleased, on behalf of the General Assembly, to thank the French Government for having agreed to organize the official signing ceremony in Paris, where 87 countries signed the Convention. I also solemnly appeal to all the States that were unable to do so in Paris to sign this Convention, so important for Africa and the world, during this session of the General Assembly.

In this connection, I wish to inform the Assembly that the text of the Convention is now in the Treaty Section of the Department of Legal Affairs and that the Convention is open for signature, in accordance with its article 33.

I now call on the Representative of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Kittani (Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on General Assembly Matters): As the Assembly knows, the Secretary-General left earlier today on a trip abroad. He asked me, first of all, to express his deep regret that he could not be here in person this afternoon to deliver his message and, secondly, to deliver it on his behalf. His statement is as follows:

“During an impressive ministerial-level ceremony in Paris on 14 and 15 October, 87 nations and one regional organization signed the United Nations Convention to combat desertification. The Convention had been adopted in June 1994 after only 13 months of intensive negotiations. This was eloquent testimony to the resolve of the international community to promote sustainable development of the world's drylands in the framework of Agenda 21.

“At the signing ceremony, there were also over 60 statements from Governments and high-level officials of intergovernmental organizations outlining concrete steps to implement the Convention immediately in Africa. This is only proper, since the Convention gives priority to Africa and since the people of that continent, who are among the world's poorest, suffer the most from the effects of dryland degradation and drought.

"In fulfilling commitments made at the June 1992 Earth Summit, the Convention breaks new ground in international law concerning environment and development. It adopts for the first time a truly integrated approach, stressing action at the community level and giving the economic and social dimensions of combating desertification equal weight to its physical and biological aspects. It thus takes its place with the climate change and biodiversity Conventions as a third pillar of the new sustainable-development paradigm."

"Among the innovative features of the Convention is a series of regional implementation annexes which provide guidance for a system of national, subregional and regional action programmes. These programmes will be developed in the framework of partnership agreements with bilateral and multilateral donors as well as with non-governmental organizations. The Conference of the Parties will oversee and review this system.

"The Convention contains all the commitments necessary to succeed in the fight to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. In the end, the key to success will be the will of the affected countries themselves and of the international community to implement the Convention effectively over the long term. Statements at the signing ceremony gave every indication that this will is there: first, affected African countries stressed their primary responsibility to initiate national action programmes, or restructure existing ones. They also exhibited their strong interest in working with neighbouring nations in elaborating subregional action programmes. Many also highlighted specific steps to inform their populations about the significance of the Convention and to set up appropriate procedures and institutions to make action programmes a reality.

"OECD countries on the other hand emphasized the high priority they give to urgent action in Africa and their intention to participate fully in consultative processes leading to partnership agreements. Many also indicated the magnitude of funding available for interim action along with specific programme initiatives. While it is not possible to give a precise figure, it appears that up to \$2 billion will be available to support Convention implementation in Africa over the next two to three years.

"Latin American and Asian countries showed genuine enthusiasm for sharing experience and technical expertise with African countries.

"United Nations agencies and other international organizations concerned with combating desertification uniformly pledged to be full partners. They also described concrete programme initiatives they were taking immediately.

"I myself am committed to mobilizing sufficient funds and to ensuring the full involvement of all agencies in the United Nations family.

"We should now do everything possible to build on the momentum which the signing ceremony generated. First and foremost, I urge all countries which have not signed the Convention to do so in New York as soon as possible.

"Secondly, I hope that a strong consensus will emerge in the Second Committee on a resolution which will allow the International Negotiating Committee to continue its work during the period before the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties and which will permit the Interim Secretariat to support the Committee.

"Lastly, we must all work assiduously to promote ratifications of the Convention in order to ensure its early entry into force. This unique legal instrument bears great promise. It is up to all of us, working together, to guarantee that it lives up to the high expectations."

The President (*interpretation from French*): I wish to inform delegations that there are approximately 30 speakers on the list of speakers for this item. I should like to propose, therefore, that the list be now closed. If I hear no objection it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on Ambassador Bo Kjellén of Sweden, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee.

Mr. Kjellén (Sweden), Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (*interpretation from French*): It is with special satisfaction that I speak under your presidency this afternoon. It will be recalled that this process began with a decision taken by Ministers of Environment in Africa, in the capital of your country in November 1991. An initiative to launch negotiations was then resumed under Chapter 12 of Agenda 21. But the road to Paris began in Abidjan.

(*spoke in English*)

I am pleased to have the opportunity to present the result of the negotiation of the Convention to combat desertification to-day. As will be recalled, this negotiation was based on a decision by the General Assembly in 1992 (resolution 47/188) following the adoption of Agenda 21, chapter 12, in Rio de Janeiro. A negotiating committee was established with the task of negotiating a convention by June 1994. It is obviously with great satisfaction that I can now report that we were able to meet the time-limit and that this Convention is now taking its proper place as one of the three major legal instruments linked to the Rio de Janeiro process. The Convention is before the Assembly. We had very little time for the completion of the negotiation: as will be recalled the first negotiating session was held in Nairobi in late May 1993.

Thanks to the competence and the hard work of the secretariat of Mr. Arba Diallo and to the constructive efforts of all negotiators we were able to negotiate a robust Convention, which has already, as you, recalled, Sir, been signed by 87 countries at the ceremony organized by the French Government in Paris just a few days ago. Let me record here my gratitude to the Government of France for its readiness to receive the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for both the final negotiating session and the signing ceremony. The participation of so many eminent personalities in Paris, the substantial contents of the statements, comment on which we have just heard, and the general atmosphere of this perfectly organized event — all bodes well for the future of the Convention as does the interest that was taken by all representatives of the regional groups who participated in the negotiation. I am very grateful to all the friends who made this possible.

When I speak of a robust Convention, I refer in the first place to its coherence and legal consistency. It was indeed negotiated rapidly, but legal experts were reviewing the text as we went along and enabled us to arrive at a satisfactory document. Secondly, I believe that we have managed to strike a reasonable balance between the

perception of desertification as a global problem and the obvious need for specific recognition of regional differences. The four regional annexes, which form an integral part of the Convention, give a special character to this Convention and form a bridge to the concrete implementation on the ground. Thirdly, I think that there is an innovative aspect of this Convention which might enhance its impact on the real world: the provisions for scientific cooperation and networking are part of a conscious effort to create a dynamic instrument of change.

What about the financial resources? No doubt the negotiation would have been easier if there had been ample new financing available. No doubt there was disappointment over the relative lack of precision in the financial provisions of the Convention. But I see no reason to underestimate what has been achieved in a period of heavy budgetary constraints and a general atmosphere of austerity. The global mechanism foreseen in the Convention may well turn out to be a very useful innovation and the notion of partnership and more efficient coordination in development cooperation may well lead to notable concrete achievements.

It would take me too long to go into a detailed presentation of the Convention. Let me just refer to two more features which in my view are essential. First is the bottom-up approach — enhanced respect for the local level and for the millions of men and women who live in the dry lands. The Convention can be a success only if their experience and expertise are fully taken into account. The second point is the integrated approach. We now realize that the problems of the dry lands need to be tackled with a whole range of measures, integrating land management, water management and energy needs while taking fully into account relevant socio-economic factors. Such issues as social structures, land ownership, educational and training facilities, local markets, transport and communications need to be given full attention and forged into powerful programmes of regional policy.

It is certainly my hope and expectation that many more countries will soon sign the Convention here in New York and that ratification procedures will move quickly. Nevertheless, it will take a certain amount of time before the Convention can enter into force. I recall that 50 ratifications are needed. But one characteristic of this Convention is the urgency of the problem. We are not just dealing with long-term problems here. As will be recalled, 900 million people are living in the dry

lands, and many of those face absolute poverty. There is no time to lose.

The situation in Africa is particularly worrying, and it is therefore logical that the Convention gives particular priority to Africa. This is expressed in the detailed African annex and in the resolution on urgent action for Africa, which calls for steps to prepare national and subregional action programmes and recommends the establishment of partnership arrangements in the affected African countries. Developed countries as well as international and multilateral organizations, agencies and programmes are also invited to provide enabling funds to support partnerships at the national and subregional levels. In fact, the urgent action for Africa is an expression of solidarity with populations who live under extremely difficult conditions, but it is also a test run for the methods of cooperation under the Convention.

As the Secretary-General stated, many countries have indicated their willingness to participate in this action, and it will be a major task for the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to support it during the interim period.

It is therefore also important to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the second resolution adopted by the Committee in June — the resolution on interim arrangements. It aims at enabling the Committee to continue its work until the first session of the Conference of the Parties. To this end, the Secretary-General is invited to make the necessary proposals and recommendations to the Assembly on future sessions of the Committee and the necessary secretariat support. These are before the Assembly in document A/49/477.

The General Assembly will have to adopt a draft resolution on the basis of this report. Consultations are already under way, and I trust that the draft resolution will not be controversial. Its contents will reflect the consensus achieved in Paris in June, and the procedure follows closely the one adopted with regard to climate change in 1992.

This means that the General Assembly is invited to agree on the convening of further sessions of the Committee in 1995 and 1996 and the continuation of the interim secretariat to provide the necessary support for the work of the Committee. A number of United Nations agencies and programmes would also be invited to expand their support for the Convention, and the importance of

continued contributions to the voluntary funds would be underlined.

It will be recalled that last year the General Assembly made provision for one session of the Committee after the conclusion of the Convention. This session will begin in New York on 9 January 1995. The provisional agenda for the sixth session of the Committee was adopted in Paris in June. The two main items refer to the work programme for the interim period and to the preparation of the first session of the Conference of the Parties. No doubt these two clusters of issues will be with us for the whole interim period. The agenda for the first session of the Conference of the Parties will be a heavy one and in the interim the Committee will have the duty to review progress on the urgent action for Africa and to be concerned with the situation in other dry land regions, such as the alarming situation in the Aral Sea Basin, where a major environmental and human disaster has to be tackled.

With regard to the January session of the Committee, I wish to highlight another issue of particular interest to the General Assembly, one which was discussed in the Second Committee this week. It concerns the Committee's role in helping to prepare the third session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, to be held in April 1995. According to the thematic work programme adopted in 1993, this session of the Commission will deal with all matters relating to land, reflected in chapters 10 to 16 of Agenda 21. As task manager, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is preparing the main document for this discussion. But the Committee should take the opportunity — and the responsibility — to discuss desertification and drought in the framework of an integrated approach to land use, with the ultimate objective of achieving long term food security for a rapidly growing world population.

It is unavoidable that a statement of this kind becomes — if I may use the expression — rather dry. But, in concluding, let me become a little more personal. Carl Sandburg once wrote:

"The Republic is a dream.

Nothing happens unless first a dream."

This Convention first seemed like a dream to those of us who were struggling with chapter 12 of Agenda 21 here in New York in March 1992. We had the initiative to

which I have already referred, taken by the African Ministers of Environment in Abidjan in late 1991, as a point of departure. But there was no way of knowing whether this particular dream would ever materialize. Now the Convention is before us. It is a source of great satisfaction and at the same time a source of concern, because this time the international community must not fail in the implementation phase.

Therefore, I warmly welcome this debate in the General Assembly. It underlines the importance of the Convention and its essential role in the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The Convention supports and is supported by the overall concept of sustainable development. It supports and is supported by the Commission on Sustainable Development, the other Conventions and the great thematic Conferences — in particular, the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing next year.

But the impact of the Convention can be felt only if it is well known. I suggest that a major effort is needed to provide information and to make people aware in both developed and developing countries, and I would welcome imaginative proposals on how this could best be accomplished.

The Convention must lead to real action on the ground for the benefit of the people living in the dry lands. It must also be a dynamic factor in promoting research and reflection on the broad issues related to the vast dry lands of the planet.

Finally, I wish to underline the political importance of our endeavour. Because peace is indivisible, conflicts may arise out of the problems of the dry lands; scarce water resources can be the cause of war; impossible human conditions may lead to uncontrollable migration. This Convention is just one of the instruments for peace and sustainable development. But it is there now, ready to be used.

Organization of work

The President (*interpretation from French*): I would like to draw the attention of the Assembly to agenda item 43, entitled "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields".

Members will recall that at the 105th plenary meeting of its forty-eighth session, the General Assembly adopted

decision 48/507 to extend into the current session the consultation process that had been initiated during the forty-eighth session regarding resources for operational activities for development. The aim of the process was to address the financing needs, with a view to reaching concrete results as soon as possible and no later than June 1995.

In accordance with decision 48/507, I have requested His Excellency Mr. T. P. Sreenivasan of India to chair on my behalf the consultations, which should take place as soon as possible, indeed beginning this month.

Agenda item 89 (*continued*)

Environment and sustainable development

- (d) **Elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa**

Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/477)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the reports of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (A/49/84, Add.1, Add.2)

Mr. Lamamra (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me first of all to extend, on behalf of the delegation that are members of the Group of 77, on behalf of the delegation of China and on my own behalf, warmest congratulations to Ambassador Bo Kjellén of Sweden, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Convention that is the subject of our discussion, on his excellent introductory statement. I am pleased to tell him that I highly value the great commitment, perseverance and competence he showed in conducting the negotiation process, with a dynamic Bureau and an effective secretariat, led by my friend Arba Diallo, at his side. This process led to the fortunate outcome that we all welcome today: the signing by 87 countries on 14 October in the French capital of the International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. The conclusion of that Convention and its annexes gives us a legal framework within which we can now take multidimensional action with a view to slowing the pace of, if not totally stopping, one of the most serious forms of deterioration of our natural environment, and to

exerting resolute efforts to reverse this trend by dealing with problems of development, which underlie the very framework of the Convention.

Mr. Mwaunglu (Malawi), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In this regard, this Convention — and in the particular context of this discussion I shall not speak of certain limits that it places on the aspirations and proposals of developing countries — is part of the heritage of the Earth Summit and should be viewed from the perspective of sustainable development. This demonstrates the highly political import of this Convention, like those on climate change and biodiversity, as a significant contribution to the strengthening of the creative partnership between the developed countries and those affected by desertification and drought — this dual phenomenon that was appropriately identified by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development as being environmentally global in nature.

The outstanding political determination shown by the various parties to the negotiation is a valuable asset from which we should now launch our enterprise of implementing the commitments entered into. In this regard, the credibility of the partnership enshrined by this Convention will obviously be determined, to a large extent, by the mobilization of sufficient new and additional financial resources and the transfer of ecologically sound technologies for the benefit of the developing countries. The establishment of the global financial mechanism provided for in article 22 of the Convention will be, from this standpoint, an important first step towards taking adequate measures to combat desertification. We must therefore resolutely pass to the stage of action and see to it that this Convention does not meet the sad fate that befell the Nairobi Programme of Action.

I should also like to note with appreciation and optimism the political support shown for the Convention during the signing ceremony last week in Paris, and the financial commitments already announced by some of our partners. I hope that we shall soon witness a collective surge of responsibility and solidarity, which will quickly be manifested by contributions to, among other things, the two special funds that operate within the mandate of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee.

Although the phenomenon of desertification unfortunately spares no continent, it is Africa that has been ravaged to the greatest extent. In fact, more than 60 per

cent of Africa's land is arid or semi-arid, and more than half its surface suffers from a lack of rainfall; the persistence of this situation leads each year to a further encroachment of the desert, thereby threatening the existence of almost 185 million human beings and rendering all efforts to protect and restore the soil extremely difficult and costly. Affecting more than 40 countries on the African continent, desertification irreversibly swallows up some 6 million hectares every year, diminishing their productive capacity — indeed, making them totally sterile. Because of this, almost 65 million hectares of African land, formerly verdant, have been taken over by the desert on the southern border of the Sahara alone over the past 50 years.

The serious effects of this scourge on both the environment and the population led to the convening in 1977 in Nairobi of the United Nations Conference on Desertification and the adoption there of the United Nations Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. Unfortunately, for lack of sufficient financial resources, this Nairobi Plan of Action did not go beyond the stage of a simple statement of intent.

Hope has now been reborn with the promising Convention whose conclusion the General Assembly hails today. But while we await the entry into force and the systematic implementation of this important global juridical instrument, the international consensus in favour of specific emergency assistance to Africa must be put fully into effect as quickly as possible, so that the African continent may play a pioneering role in the international community's counter-attack against the challenge of desertification.

A turning-point was reached in Paris last week, and another begins today. We should first of all see to it that there is no delay in the signatory States' ratification of this Convention, which bears a message of hope and solidarity, so that we can identify as quickly as possible the concrete action to be taken in the field. In addition, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee should be mandated to continue and intensify its task to that end. Above all, the International Convention to combat desertification and drought should give rise to a true spirit of cooperation, based on the partnership between the countries of the North and those of the South; this partnership — which today links the developed countries and the affected developing countries on the basis of the principle of common, but also differential, responsibility — should open up new prospects for international cooperation in preserving the ecological

balance of the Earth as the common heritage of the current and future generations.

Mr. Henze (Germany): I am speaking on behalf of the European Union, and Austria.

I should like first to join the Chairman of the Group of 77 in congratulating Ambassador Kjellén for his work on the Convention. His great efforts, deep engagement and persistence greatly contributed to the success of the negotiations, which, as we all know, were sometimes rather difficult.

The European Union feels that, two years after the Rio Conference on Environment and Development, we are now able to register important progress in the area of sustainable development. The Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, is an important milestone in this process. The European Union was determined to shape actively the negotiating process leading to this Convention from the very beginning. We are pleased that the final text was opened for signature just one week ago in Paris, on 14 October 1994.

Along with the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, a third important Convention arising out of the Rio Conference in the field of sustainable development has thus been successfully concluded. It is an integral part of the emerging framework of legally binding conventions and concrete action plans for sustainable development. We will have to continue on this road to tackle these urgent problems of humanity. It is a good example of how to maintain the right balance between development and environment concerns.

When we all initiated the negotiating process towards the present Convention during the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, we knew how important the role of the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee and the corresponding support of the Secretariat of the United Nations would be. The Bureau, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Bo Kjellén, and the secretariat of the Committee deserve our deep gratitude for having wisely guided our deliberations. It was their personal commitment which helped us to negotiate the necessary compromises.

Speaking on behalf of the European Union and Austria, I am proud to underline that the European part in the negotiations was the result of a successful community

exercise. The respective European Union presidencies of Denmark, Belgium and Greece, which led the European Union in these negotiations with enormous commitment, contributed to the successful conclusion of the negotiations. I further wish to thank the President of France and his Government, who, apart from their most valuable input into our Community deliberations, made it possible to sign the Convention in Paris.

The fight against desertification is a central element in our development cooperation. The European Union has long been responsible for approximately 50 per cent of global development cooperation. With regard to Africa, this percentage is even higher, at 62 per cent. The funds allocated for this purpose, in accordance with the Lomé Convention, in 1992 alone amounted to \$1.9 billion. Since then, another \$434 million have been promised to be made available from the Commission programmes for desertification schemes and forest and rural development programmes.

Despite all these efforts, however, we must realize that the situation of 900 million affected people has not improved as much as would be desirable and in some countries has even deteriorated. The lack of concrete, cause-oriented and effective programmes to combat desertification must be overcome. Too often, individual projects have been geared only towards clearing up symptoms while the actual causes and framework conditions which determine the conduct of land-users have not been sufficiently taken into consideration. Clear rights regarding soil ownership are very often the prerequisite of a form of land-use planning that promotes sustainable development. All parties to the Convention should therefore agree to make the fight against the root causes of desertification a primary focus of their negotiations.

As a consequence, the struggle against desertification has been given a new approach in the Convention. The European Union shares the confidence of its partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America that we have jointly learned the lessons of the past during the 18 months of negotiations. We feel that the process of elaborating national action programmes in developing countries is of the utmost priority. We are committed to continuing our assistance within the established framework. All those involved have to join forces. We believe that realistic action programmes that intimately involve the concerned populations are the best guarantee for a successful fight against desertification. The Convention offers the opportunity to implement

integrated, coordinated and coherent programmes at the national and subregional levels. The session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee scheduled for January 1995 should be able to put this process on track. The call is for specific answers to the concrete tasks of sustainable development and the regional implementation of Agenda 21.

A closely coordinated effort of donor countries and affected developing countries is imperative. A quick follow-up to the signing of the Convention, in particular the resolution on urgent action for Africa, must be ensured. Together we must create the conditions to improve the translation of action programmes into reality. Furthermore, the Conference of the Parties should be speedily prepared.

The fight against desertification is a critical element of sustainable development of global dimensions, in that it affects all regions of the world, including developing and developed countries. As a consequence, some of the affected countries of the European Union have assumed the particular obligation for implementing the Convention in the form of a special Annex applying to the Northern Mediterranean countries.

The Commission on Sustainable Development will address the issues of desertification together with those of sustainable land use, biodiversity and forests during its next session in 1995. As the discussion of sustainable development on the international level has become more and more concrete over time, we will have to deal with these issues in an integrated way to achieve a comparable level of progress across the board.

Mr. Fraser (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): This is the first Convention negotiated since Rio, and it reflects the spirit and commitment of the international community to protect the environment through the promotion of sustainable development.

As we stated at the signing ceremony for the Convention to Combat Desertification, in Paris on 14 October, Canada is proud to have taken an active part in the creation of an instrument that will permit concerted world action to attack the problem of desertification and to find solutions that are preventative, corrective and lasting.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada is particularly happy that it has been recognized that the fight against desertification must integrate socio-economic and cultural realities within the

environmental context. Priority must be given to the reinforcement of human and institutional capacities of the affected developing countries and of their populations so that these people will be able to become masters of their own development.

For the Convention to bear fruit, it is crucial that affected countries assume leadership. Donor countries will contribute resources and technical assistance in support of these efforts.

As a measure of Canadian concern, the Canadian International Development Agency will commit \$4 million for urgent assistance to Africa, as well as programming \$100 million for anti-desertification programmes in Africa over the next five years. Ongoing projects in other regions will also contribute to efforts to combat desertification.

I am sure that my delegation would want me to say a special word of thanks to Ambassador Bo Kjellén and others, who worked so hard to bring about this Convention.

Mr. Ould Ely (Mauritania) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of Mauritania associates itself fully with the clear and eloquent statement made by Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, the Ambassador of Algeria, on behalf of the States members of the Group of 77 and on behalf of China. My statement today will therefore echo the position expressed on the content and implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa.

The fact that the General Assembly decided to hold this debate in plenary meetings under the presidency of Mr. Amara Essy of Côte d'Ivoire is in itself a happy coincidence. In fact, it was in Abidjan, the economic capital of Côte d'Ivoire, that the idea of drafting a convention to combat the dual phenomenon of drought and desertification was launched in November 1991 by Africa's Ministers for planning and the environment.

This important initiative reflected the legitimate need to recognize that what is at stake is the survival of many developing countries, particularly in Africa, and to engage more effectively and more comprehensively in the struggle against the harmful and insidious effects of these two scourges. The same initiative became the foundation on which the Earth Summit built the process of negotiation to secure a strong and operational convention.

My delegation welcomes the unanimous adoption of the Convention and its annexes — in particular those that refer to Africa, which, quite appropriately, fill a legal gap in the sphere of the eradication of desertification and the mitigation of the effects of drought.

This undertaking could not have succeeded without the well-known foresight and dynamism of Ambassador Bo Kjellén, who chaired the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, and Ambassador Arba Diallo, the Executive Secretary, both of whom gave a decisive impetus to the negotiations. Once again we express our gratitude to them.

The other architects of success have undoubtedly been the authorities of France, who having backed this initiative from the outset, provided outstanding facilities for the last session of the Negotiating Committee. The most recent example was the organization, last weekend in Paris, of an impressive ceremony for the signing of the Convention. We therefore express our warmest thanks to France.

Indeed, the signing of the Convention by a very large number of Heads of Government and plenipotentiary ministers is undoubtedly the eloquent expression of a politically significant measure of great import. It is politically significant because it reflects a growing awareness of the worldwide scale of the problem and indicates a common interest in finding lasting solutions to these phenomena. This awareness stems from the complex impact of the phenomenon of desertification, which, in the event of failure to find remedies for its causes and its effects, may well give rise to serious gaps in the ecological balance of our planet.

Desertification is a global phenomenon with worldwide social, economic and environmental effects. It is a phenomenon whose full force is felt in Africa in particular, and it is accompanied by structural food shortages, endemic famine and rural depopulation, as well as by a worsening food situation and the incurring of external debt.

Faced with a steady drop in their per capita revenue, constantly worsening terms of trade, a constant reduction in their sources of foreign finance, and Draconian regulations governing access to markets for their products, the countries affected by this tragedy place a great deal of hope in the effective implementation of the financial and technical commitments contained in the Convention, as well as in the interim preferential measures.

We continue to stress that this is a global phenomenon and that the spread of desertification cannot be reduced to the simple dimension of urgency; its remedies cannot be limited to simple humanitarian operations, however necessary these may be. Because we have ignored this basic truth and hidden the true nature of the problem of desertification, the shortcomings of the solutions that have so far been advocated, through the 1977 Plan of Action, have been vividly revealed.

The advance of the desert irreparably eats up several million hectares of fertile land every year and requires the drafting and implementation in the medium and long terms of a global strategy focusing on control of the main causes of desertification. These measures are so urgent that we must ensure the rapid implementation of the Convention, which is an excellent framework for this process. In fact, the exceptional seriousness of the economic situation in the countries affected by these phenomena, especially those in Africa, calls for political will — and we are certain it will be manifested in the near future.

There can be no doubt that desertification and drought directly affect more than one fifth of the population of the Earth. Procrastination in the honouring of commitments will make it impossible to control the tragic effects of these phenomena. That is why, today, we have a historical duty to mankind to do everything possible to ensure the successful implementation of this Convention and, thereby, make it an instrument capable of generating greater wealth and prosperity.

Mr. Sreenivasan (India): I am happy to speak today, when we have, to some extent, achieved one of the objectives that we had set for ourselves at Rio. Along with the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the drawing up of the Programme of Action on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the successful conclusion of negotiations on the elaboration of a Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification is a matter of satisfaction.

India was among the countries that signed the Convention in Paris last week. India has also been one of the Vice-Chairmen of the Bureau that has assisted the process of intergovernmental negotiations and has actively participated in its deliberations as well as in the preparation of the regional annex for Asia. We wish to place on record our appreciation for Ambassador Bo

Kjellén of Sweden, whose painstaking efforts have brought these negotiations to fruition.

The urgency and moral imperative for tackling the problem of desertification and drought lies in the fact that it affects some of the poorest people in the world. Countries in which the vast majority of the people live off the land, finding both sustenance and employment in farming and agriculture, face catastrophic consequences with the loss of soil fertility, lack of rainfall and diminishing groundwater levels. Desperate bids to increase food production by clearing forests for farms and using chemical fertilizers ironically results in a vicious circle, perpetrating exactly that which is sought to be prevented. Poverty increases in extent and intensity. Growing populations and the inability to handle environmental problems are the consequences, not the causes, of underdevelopment and environmental degradation.

The world today is without a doubt alive to environmental issues as never before. In every country, in every remote village as well as in large and growing cities, there is palpable concern about the spectre of environmental disaster. But this concern seems to be expressed in ways that are diametrically opposite, depending on economic situations. The rich and well-off talk about ozone depletion, global warming and nuclear hazards, all the while inducing some of these through their unsustainable production and consumption patterns. The poor man, on the other hand, understands only that his crops wither in the barren lands; his wife knows that she walks up to a dozen kilometres daily to collect a few potsful of water; and their children know, with harsh inevitability, that they will go to bed hungry once again.

Scientists and experts tell us that many of these problems are related to climate change, shifting monsoon patterns, falling groundwater levels and even, indirectly, to ozone-layer depletion, because of its ill-effects on vegetation. But how do we explain all this to the victims of famine and drought? How do we convince the toiling farmer of the linkages between his land's becoming more infertile day by day and the larger environmental issues? How do we give a human face to environment?

The most satisfying feature of the Convention we are signing today is that it reflects a basic concern of the developing world and directly seeks to tackle real human problems. It was no doubt contemplated largely in the context of Africa, a continent blessed with some of the richest natural resources on the planet but also hit by some of the harshest blows of nature. However, what is true of

Africa is also true of the other regions of the world. The Convention also correctly distinguishes between deserts and lands prone to desertification and drought. Both conditions need immediate attention; specific situations need specific solutions. The regional annexes adopted along with the Convention bear testimony to the soundness of this approach and to its coverage of all the regions of the world.

India is a vast and varied country; indeed, it is a subcontinent in itself. From its lofty mountain peaks to its thousands of kilometres of coastline, almost every natural condition known to humankind can be encountered. It has deserts of sand and deserts of snow, but most disquieting is that 120 million hectares — nearly 40 per cent of our land area — are threatened with desertification in one way or the other. We have, over the years, initiated a variety of programmes to deal with these problems, to help conserve water and soil, to plant trees and preserve forests. Our afforestation effort alone is of the order of 2 million hectares annually. We have met with considerable success in our efforts, but these have been limited by the financial resources at our command.

Like everything else that resulted from Rio, including Agenda 21, adequate financial and appropriate technological resources need to be made available if the implementation of this Convention is to become a reality. The Global Environmental Facility includes in its mandate land-degradation issues, but this is only a very small beginning. The Facility cannot be expected to adequately meet the requirements of every pressing environmental need. The question of a well-defined and more specific financial mechanism must be quickly and constructively resolved. Questions of war and peace seem to have gripped the attention of donor countries to the exclusion of official development assistance. The irony of it all is that, since Rio, this assistance has actually declined in percentage as well as in real terms. We have to realize that environmental degradation is as much of a threat to the planet and to civil society as is war, and we will have to combat it with as much vigour.

Financial resources, important as they are, will not alone solve the problem. This complicated matter of halting and reversing desertification requires a significant input of appropriate technology. We have talked about the necessity of technology transfer for many years now and even committed ourselves to do so in the Rio agreements, but a consensus on how this is to be achieved has eluded us. On our part, we in India are

eager to share our technological expertise with our African brothers and sisters and to cooperate with them and other fellow developing countries in the fight against the marching sands. But unless the more advanced technologies of the developed countries are made available and accessible, at affordable rates and on acceptable terms, to developing countries on all continents, the problem of desertification will continue to remain intractable, threatening the very existence of our planet.

If global environmental issues are not to remain in the realm of the abstract, then there must be no more parched throats, no more needless threats to infant life, no more daily assaults on human dignity with the battering rams of hunger, unemployment and disease. Circumstances and situations that are life-denying must be moulded into those that are life-giving. Rio and the events that followed gave our planet one more chance. We must be careful lest we squander this opportunity.

Mr. Rowe (Australia): Combating desertification has been the subject of international efforts for many years, but these efforts have not met with the success hoped of them. Now, there has been a significant step forward. On 14 and 15 October, many countries signalled their commitment to carry forward efforts to combat desertification by signing the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa. Australia was among those countries which signed the Convention in Paris.

Australia wishes to pay tribute to the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, Ambassador Kjellén, for his outstanding work and contribution, and to the other members of the Bureau and to the Secretariat of the Committee in bringing about the outcome the Convention represents.

A great deal is at stake in this Convention. One sixth of the world's population and one quarter of the total land area of the world are affected by desertification. These facts and figures identify something far more important: the human misery and poverty associated with desertification. Many nations have taken steps, through the intelligent use of water and reforestation, to reclaim deserts. Australia has taken an active part in the negotiations as an international citizen determined to contribute to improving the global environment and the well-being of so many affected people, especially in Africa.

Desertification is also an important domestic issue for Australia, as it is for several other temperate countries in the southern hemisphere. Some 70 per cent of the Australian continent is arid or semi-arid, receiving less than 500 millimetres of rainfall annually. Despite this, land- and resource-based industries play a vital role in Australia's economy. Agriculture is the largest user of land in Australia. While there have been significant increases in productivity over the last 40 years, there have been serious costs in land degradation. This has necessitated a change in approach to land management.

The Australian Government sees the management of land degradation as important to the long-term viability of Australia's land- and resource-based industries and the protection of our environment. In 1990 the Federal and State Governments of Australia agreed to develop a national decade of land-care plan. The aim of this plan is to achieve ecologically sustainable development through the implementation of a cooperative partnership between Governments at all levels, the community and individuals to address land degradation.

Community action is important in encouraging the adoption of changed practices. At the local level, land-care groups have been established to identify and respond to land-management problems.

The success of what we call the land-care movement is reflected in the participation rate — there are now around 2,200 land-care groups Australia-wide, representing some 30 per cent of landholders. The number continues to grow despite four years of drought and economic and social hardship in our rural communities.

These land-care groups in Australia look at practical measures for dealing with desertification and land degradation, such as taking unsuitable land out of agriculture; minimal tillage; reforestation; contour and rotational cultivation and cropping; the use of the key-line watering system; and the growth of trees suitable for fodder supplementation in semi-arid and drought-prone regions. In these many ways our land-care groups add to an increasing knowledge which can assist Australia to maintain its productive assets and increase the natural environment.

Australia wishes to extend its own research and knowledge and to share this experience with the international community. Article 10 of the Convention, setting out the elements of national action programmes to

combat desertification, is based largely on an Australian proposal which was in turn based on Australia's experience with land care, and reflects our willingness to share that experience with other people and other nations with similar problems.

The international community's approach to the Convention has shown urgency and maturity. We have learned valuable lessons from past attempts to address desertification. It is no accident that the Convention concentrates on the socio-economic causes of desertification; and not just the symptoms. The emphasis in the Convention is on integrating "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches so that Governments and communities can work together.

This partnership extends to other areas of the Convention. Countries have agreed to work together to target and utilize more effectively existing funding for desertification programmes; to integrate and coordinate the collection, analysis and exchange of information relevant to desertification; and to promote technical and scientific cooperation.

But much remains to be done. We must ensure that the provisions of the Convention are converted into effective and practical action. The first step is the urgent action package for Africa. The Australian Government already supports various programmes in Africa addressing aspects of desertification and drought mitigation. Examples of these programmes include: reforestation in Tanzania; rural water supplies in Mozambique; a land-information strategic plan for Namibia; rural rehabilitation in Eritrea; and agricultural training in South Africa through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The Australian Treasurer, the Honourable Ralph Willis, announced in Paris last week a special contribution by the Australian Government as part of the urgent action for Africa programme, including a contribution of up to \$A250,000 over several years for the provision of Australian constancy services in combating desertification. This money will be available to African States for technical assistance and advice in setting up their national action programmes. Australia also plans to undertake, through its Bureau of Meteorology, a joint feasibility study with the World Meteorological Organization for the establishment of a network linking the two drought-monitoring centres in Nairobi and Harare with the African Centre of Meteorological Application for Development, in Niamey. Australia is investigating means of initiating a research programme on the ecological problems facing arid and

semi-arid regions. The aim is to produce a set of principles to guide the development of national action programmes for specific countries. We hope that these programmes will contribute to the launching and success of the urgent action for Africa programme.

Ways of dealing with the scarcity of water are a fundamental part of sustainable land management. A major focus must be on the proper use of water. Its wastage should be condemned and the encouragement of its productive usage must be a priority. In Australia we are only now — at a time when we are experiencing possibly the worst drought in Australia's history — coming fully to appreciate that water is not a cheap renewable resource.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize again the importance of community participation in the battle against desertification. The Australian experience has shown that individual land holders, community groups and non-governmental organizations must play a crucial role in the implementation of the Convention; Government cannot do it alone. It has to be a joint and continuing contribution.

We urge the international community to work energetically. Cooperating together we can ensure that this Convention achieves its objectives for affected people around the world.

Mr. Hønningstad (Norway): I have the honour to speak on behalf of Norway and the other Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden.

The ceremony in Paris a week ago for the signing of the international Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, represents a significant step in the follow-up of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). With its integration of environment and development, this important document epitomizes the basic concept of the Rio Conference — sustainable development. We pay tribute to the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee under the chairmanship of Ambassador Bo Kjellén, and to the Committee's secretariat for their efforts and valuable contributions to the negotiating process.

The Convention provides a framework for affected countries and peoples, as well as for relevant organizations and donors, to address the serious problems

caused by land degradation and the increasing imbalances between people and available resources. It will contribute to safeguarding the global environment. In addition to its significance for economic and social development, it will also reduce the risk of conflict that may arise from drought and lack of water. Not least important is the emphasis on urgent action for Africa through the special resolution to this effect adopted at the same time as the Convention.

Like the Rio process itself, the Convention will ultimately be judged by its implementation. This endeavour must be carried forward on the international, regional, national and local levels. It requires the involvement of all strata of society.

The Nordic countries will actively participate in the implementation effort. This includes reviewing development cooperation in areas such as poverty alleviation, land degradation and fresh water in the light of the Convention's provisions. It will thereby be possible to further develop relevant programmes in land management as well as in institution- and capacity-building.

The Convention has thus far been signed by close to 90 parties. It is now open for signature here at the United Nations in New York. The Nordic countries would like to echo the statement of the Secretary-General in this respect; we urge the countries that have not already done so to sign and ratify the Convention in order to ensure its entering into force as soon as possible. In the meantime, satisfactory arrangements for the interim period must be decided upon by the General Assembly, in accordance with the agreement reached in Paris in June and in the light of the report (A/49/477) of the Secretary-General under this agenda item.

The ceremony in Paris a week ago symbolized the end of a long negotiating effort. It should also signify the start of a decisive and purposeful endeavour to transform the paragraphs of the Convention into concrete action. We must use the next session of the Negotiating Committee in January and the session of the Commission for Sustainable Development in April to give impetus to this effort.

Mr. Eliashiv (Israel): The successful conclusion and adoption of the Convention to combat desertification, signed recently in Paris by a large number of States, including Israel, is indeed recognition by the international community that human beings in affected or threatened areas are at the centre of concerns to combat desertification and mitigate the adverse effects of drought.

This is yet another important achievement of the international community in the follow-up to the Rio Conference, as part of our commitment to build on the momentum of international cooperation on the environment and sustainable development. We must now translate the words of the Convention into deeds and implement a programme of action. We welcome the coordinated activities aimed at supporting the effective implementation of the Convention and the urgent measures for Africa. In this respect, United Nations organizations and agencies active in the fields of combating desertification and of development can play an important role by expanding and intensifying their support.

Our appreciation goes to Ambassador Kjellén and Ambassador Diallo for their efforts and contribution.

Desertification, a phenomenon of global dimensions, affects the lives and well-being of 2.7 billion people. All of us who are concerned about the environment must redouble our efforts to eradicate desertification. No country is exempt from this effort and each one, large or small, rich or poor, must contribute to facing the challenge to the extent of its capabilities.

Israel has a firm commitment to combating desertification. We can avoid each other's errors and emulate each other's successes. Nothing is more urgent than a programme of environmental information, compilation, dissemination and monitoring under international auspices. Nearly every problem has a possible technological or scientific solution, provided there is a desire to solve it and to make the financial means available. Solutions are viable only if they are conceived and put into effect on a global scale.

Israel is especially sensitive to the fragility of the environment and development because our country's rebirth is a continuous ecological drama of rehabilitating scarred, eroded, denuded landscape, of redeeming fertile valleys degraded into buzzing malarial swamps and of reversing the rapacity and neglect which had created the desert.

Man's endeavours to settle the desert and his attempts to extract a livelihood out of the barren land are as ancient as man himself. The Prophet Isaiah gave expression to these endeavours when he said

"The wilderness and the arid land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the tulip." (*Isaiah 35:1*)

The central gift of Israel's experience to the hope of environmental improvement lies in the Negev adventure. Believing that the desert is man's creation and not the inexorable decree of nature or history, we have launched a campaign against aridity, with results that are being shared with other nations of the world.

Our research is adapted to the particular requirements of our area, and is linked to the very extensive developments in Israel in the use of water resources and in processes of desalination of sea water and brackish water in the desert. All of this research and development, which includes the highest degree of water control in the world, is directed towards turning arid deserts into green, fruitful, food-bearing soil.

The National Desert Research Institute at Ben Gurion University in Israel is engaged in research and development on arid zones and, in particular, on the conversion of the desert into a productive environment. The scope of the institution's activities transcends Israel's borders, for much of the research has worldwide significance.

In fact, Israel has already initiated its activities under the Convention by establishing a master plan for an international centre for combating desertification, to be located at Sede Boqer in the Negev Desert. This will actually be an extension and upgrading of the Blaustein Institute for Desert Research, which, in addition to its national responsibilities, will assume a regional and international role in the study of and training in desert research and desertification control.

Ms. Arystanbekova (Kazakhstan), Vice President, took the Chair.

Israel is willing to share its rich experience and know-how in combating desertification with neighbouring countries, as well as with other countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. We invite all countries to join us in the venture of desert research and share our experience in finding solutions to desertification, in particular within the framework of the Convention's action programmes for our region in Asia.

The human factor is no less central to combating desertification, in bringing about the effective involvement of the population and in implementing national policies.

Therefore, increased attention will have to be directed to human resources, sustainable development and the transfer of training and technology. We have placed a great deal of emphasis on the development of human resources, which has become the key to the country's technological expansion and a marked feature of its extensive technical and economic cooperation with other countries.

The importance of adequate funding mechanisms cannot be overemphasized. In this respect, we must continue to replenish and strengthen the capability of the Global Environment Facility to finance environmental programmes of the countries concerned. Non-governmental environmental organizations should be given our support for their continuing activities as catalysts for environmental improvement. Within the framework of the activities of the Commission on Sustainable Development, as part of the implementation of Agenda 21 and in support of the implementation of the concerted efforts to combat desertification, we are planning to convene in Israel in 1995 an international seminar on water management, co-sponsored by Israel and Japan. Furthermore, in November 1994, an international workshop on arid-land crops will take place in Israel at Ben-Gurion University in the Negev.

While general awareness and policies must be outlined on a global level, special importance should be attributed to regional cooperation in solving problems of common interest. The Middle East possesses vast desert lands, but meagre water resources. The desert can be turned into green, fertile land. The experience and technology are available. Water can be reused and new fresh water can be produced from the sea.

The historic landmark in the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians, the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan that was initialled on Monday and will be signed next week, the ongoing multilateral negotiations and the unprecedented conference that will convene in Casablanca later this month open new vistas for regional cooperation and partnership in devising ways and means to combat desertification and to advance economic and social development. We can work together to advance regional projects in arid-zone agricultural development, alternate sources of energy, and desalination technology. We can cooperate to establish a regional network of research and monitoring centres for combating desertification, thus promoting the welfare of all the inhabitants of our region.

We hope that peace will eventually embrace all neighbouring countries so that we can achieve a comprehensive settlement in our region and dedicate our efforts and resources to sustainable economic development.

Mr. Mongbe (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): On 22 December 1992, when the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, resolution 47/188 on the "Establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa", many delegations were sceptical about the Committee's chances for success.

Admittedly, the Assembly was taking the international community into difficult terrain; there were few studies or in-depth analytical documents to help the Committee and facilitate the negotiations. This was a challenge that all States had to take up in a joint effort. In spite of the difficulties, the pitfalls, the pressure and the sleepless nights, the negotiators managed to carry out their task with unswerving determination. Following an organizational session and five negotiating sessions that took the Committee from New York to Paris, via Nairobi and Geneva, a Convention was concluded on 17 June 1994.

Today, we can say with a feeling of satisfaction that the international community has won the battle. But it has not yet won the war to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in affected countries. The road ahead is long, very long. We must hone our weapons and spare no effort if we are to achieve our goal.

The conclusion, adoption and opening for signature of the Convention will permit us to proceed to the more complex, slower-paced phases: ratification and entry into force of the Convention and the effective implementation of its provisions. The negotiators have not lost sight of these issues, which could be obstacles that would slow us in our progress towards the final objective.

In that connection, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, on 17 June 1994, adopted a resolution on urgent measures for Africa, calling on affected African countries to take urgent action, including the preparation of regional and subregional action programmes. It also encourages developed countries and international and regional institutions to provide financial and other forms of support for African initiatives. The resolution recommends that African countries and donors strengthen their partnership. It is important to stress that the resolution on

urgent measures for Africa covers the period from the signing of the Convention to its entry into force 90 days after the Secretary-General has received the fiftieth instrument of ratification.

I take this opportunity to thank all the countries and institutions that pledged contributions during their statements at the Convention's signing ceremony at Paris on 14 and 15 October. Those contributions will have a significant impact on the interim implementation of the Convention and will help us succeed in achieving the objectives to be met before the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties. I am convinced that States and organizations which have not yet stated their intentions will do so in the near future, thus demonstrating their firm commitment to the implementation of the resolution and the Convention.

This new international legal instrument is a concrete result of the decisions and recommendations of the June 1992 Rio summit; it is very different from previous instruments. For the first time, an international convention has integrated the ideas of environment and development; it has laid down principles that will underlie international cooperation in combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought. It has given us clear, precise guidelines on the measures we must take to attack those two scourges and coordinate national, subregional and/or regional programmes of action as well as the activities of communities and international and non-governmental organizations.

I should also like to emphasize that the Convention has four annexes for regional implementation, which allows activities to be adapted to the specific conditions of each region. The annex relating to Africa is the only one of the four regional texts to set out specific obligations in the implementation of which the developed countries parties to the Convention must give priority to Africa, the continent most affected by desertification and drought.

With regard to technical assistance, the African annex refers to the need to give preference to African experts, whose services would be far less costly than those of foreign consultants. In addition, in the body of the Convention, as well as in the annexes, which are part and parcel of the Convention, the idea of partnership is given pride of place, as is coordination of scientific and technological cooperation.

We owe everything we have been able to achieve, including the insertion of new elements in the articles of the Convention, to all the participants in the negotiation process, who showed determination, perseverance and responsibility in arriving at this compromise text. We cannot fail to make special mention of the exceptional role played by Ambassador Bo Kjellén of Sweden, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, who at trying moments used his great intelligence and patience to restore hope to the various participants in the negotiations. I take personal pride in having worked and continuing to work on the Bureau with that talented and experienced man. I would like to add to this friendly tribute my appreciation of my colleagues on the Bureau, the officers of the Working Groups, the spokespersons of the regional groups and interest groups, and all those whose discretion and selflessness helped cement together the stones used in building the edifice of this Convention. I naturally express fraternal feelings to Ambassador Hama Arba Diallo, Executive Secretary of the Committee, whose conviction, tenacity and personal commitment, with the support of a team of men and women of great skill and dedication, made it possible to provide optimal conditions for the Committee's work. The Organization of African Unity, with the encouragement of its Secretary-General and the support of the members of the joint secretariat and the ad hoc group of African experts on desertification, played an invaluable role that enabled Africa to maintain the initiative and conduct fruitful negotiations with other regions of the world.

I would be remiss if I did not praise the role and active participation of non-governmental organizations in the elaboration of the Convention. Last week's memorable ceremony for the signing of the Convention, organized by France, confirmed, if there was ever any doubt, the support the great country of France has always given to African delegations since they submitted this initiative to the Preparatory Committee of the Rio Conference. We should like to express here our deepest appreciation to France.

The time has come to turn our words into deeds. The Convention is an exemplary framework for action. It is our duty and obligation to act in order to put an end to the suffering of the populations affected throughout the world, especially those in Africa. In his statement at the ceremony for the signing of the Convention, Ambassador Arba Diallo stated:

"The political will that prevailed in the negotiations for the Convention should also prevail in the various

phases of its implementation. This is essential for its success."

I would like to endorse that idea, and I call on all States to continue to be inspired by the spirit of Rio, which guides us along the path of the achievement of sustainable development.

Mr. Rahman (Bangladesh): The elaboration of the International Convention to combat desertification has brought to fruition the sustained efforts generated since the Rio Earth Summit.

I add my voice to the warm tributes paid to Ambassador Bo Kjellén for his successful charting of the course of negotiations conducted through five preparatory meetings, held in three continents over two years, and for coordinating a wide variety of positions.

The introductory statements of Mr. Ismat Kittani, on behalf of the Secretary-General, and Ambassador Bo Kjellén succinctly outlined where we stand today and the directions for urgently following up the Convention, both in the short term and in its long-term orientation.

The Rio Earth Summit highlighted the crucial link between environment and development and propagated the now widely accepted and recognized concept of sustainable development. Yet, in adopting the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, there was recognition that one specific issue was left pending: the degradation of vast areas of the Earth's surface because of drought and desertification. It is therefore a matter of great satisfaction that this void has now been filled in.

No one can doubt the significance of the fact that 25 per cent of the land surface of the earth is afflicted by the spread of drylands and creeping desertification. This has affected the lives and well-being of 900 million people. The impact of this phenomenon has been most severe in Africa. Bangladesh has fully supported the need, in taking remedial steps, to accord particular priority to affected African countries.

We believe it is important, however, that attention also be devoted to vast areas that are potentially vulnerable to and threatened by the desertification process. Desertification, as we all know, is caused by a complex interaction between physical, political, social, cultural and economic factors. It is therefore vitally necessary to anticipate and adopt a forward-looking

approach. A host of preventive actions should constitute the core of any effective strategy, since prevention and reduction of land degradation is more economical than reclamation of desertified land. Another integral element of an overall strategy would be combating drought, since prolonged drought can cause serious land degradation leading to desertification.

I am happy to announce that Bangladesh signed the international Convention to combat desertification in Paris last week. As is well known, Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Given the poor land-man ratio and the urgent need for enhanced food production, there is a growing concern that prolonged drought, inadequate rainfall, a drastic fall in the ground-water table, and the consequent change in soil properties and the soil degradation in recent years, especially in the dry season, will have a sustained and cumulative adverse impact on our economy and living standards. There are already appreciable indications of semi-aridity in the north-western region of the country. The situation is further aggravated by decreased water flows in some major river systems, particularly during the dry season. The management of water resources in the eastern Himalayan region falls far short of meeting the ecological needs of the region.

Various provisions of the Convention constitute a useful basis for effectively combating drought and desertification. Recognition of the need to integrate strategies for eradicating poverty into efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought is vital. We sincerely expect that under the obligations enjoined by the Convention developed countries parties to the Convention would actively support the efforts of affected developing countries, particularly those in Africa, and the least developed countries in dealing with the problem.

Bangladesh attaches particular importance to the implementation of preventive measures for lands that are not yet degraded or which are only slightly degraded, and the international community should complement such measures. We feel that such measures may include, *inter alia*, the establishment of early-warning systems, the strengthening of drought preparedness and management and food security systems. The cooperation of the international community, particularly in the framework of subregional action programmes, is crucial in this regard. Such cooperation should include, among others, joint programmes for the sustainable management of transboundary natural resources. We also appreciate the spirit of partnership which prevailed throughout the

negotiations and the bottom-up approach involving local participation. The role of the non-governmental organizations can be a critical element for the effective implementation and follow-up of the Convention.

We welcome the simultaneous adoption of the three regional annexes, which form an integral part of the Convention. They provide concrete guidelines for a focused approach on regional specificities. As for the regional implementation annex for Asia, the broad diversity ranging from areas already affected to areas vulnerable to desertification and drought has been duly recognized. Provisions for subregional joint action programmes have broadened the scope for coordination and meaningful cooperation in various fields.

It is particularly important that partial data or lack of precise data should not be an excuse for inaction, whether by decision-makers and by the global community at large. Delay would be terribly costly as some forms of environmental damage may be irreversible. We hope that the dangers of an impending environmental crisis may be instrumental in forging closer cooperation in research, exchange of information, transfer of technology and technical know-how. We also look forward to an equitable sharing of resources among countries rich and poor, with a view to saving our planet and ensuring the betterment of the lives of future generations.

This brings us to the critical issue of the means of implementation of the various measures envisaged in the Convention. The United Nations Environment Programme has estimated that it would take between \$10 billion and \$22.4 billion a year for 20 years to prevent further land degradation and to undertake numerous land conservation projects. In this context, the question of new and additional resources is of crucial importance. Bangladesh fully supports the idea of the global mechanism and hopes that the global mechanism as envisaged in the Convention will be successful in promoting actions leading to the mobilization and channelling of substantial financial resources, including the transfer of technology, on a grant basis or on concessional terms to affected and threatened developing countries. The Global Environment Facility, with limited resources to implement Agenda 21 and the Conventions on climate change and biodiversity, is now overburdened as Governments are urged to promote the mobilization of adequate, timely and predictable financial resources, including new and additional funding from the Global Environment Facility.

The problem of desertification has assumed global proportions with contingent economic, social and political connotations. We believe there is a moral obligation on the part of the comity of nations to help those millions whose lives are directly affected by this problem. As we move towards combating desertification, the global community should put equal emphasis on arresting land degradation, especially in densely populated countries. Bilateral and multilateral financial mechanisms and arrangements must take into full consideration the special situation and needs of the least developed countries as they are striving hard to overcome the menace of desertification and to arrest the threat of land degradation. The urgency of taking any remedial action cannot be overemphasized.

Mr. Azwai (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express thanks on behalf of my delegation to all those who have contributed directly or indirectly to the elaboration of the International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, which was signed in Paris last week.

This Convention is the first international mechanism to combat desertification. We attach great hopes to this instrument for the preservation of the planet and for ensuring future development on it for present and future generations.

It is a fact that desertification and drought are among the most important problems threatening environmental balance with the resultant threat to human life in many parts of the world. The African continent is the region most affected by drought and desertification. It is gratifying that this has become an international concern. The need to combat this grave problem is widely recognized. The Convention to combat desertification was elaborated as a follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It is our hope that it will enjoy the political and financial support needed for the achievement of the objectives that previous efforts failed to achieve because of limited resources.

My country attaches the greatest importance to questions of environment and development, as it is exposed to the encroachment of the sands from the south, sea pollution in the north, the scarcity of water resources and rainfall fluctuations, and periods of drought which last, sometimes for three to five years. All these phenomena are rendered more acute because of the scarcity of underground water which is not sufficient for irrigating arable land.

Recognizing the importance of the grave threats posed by these phenomena to the natural resources we depend upon for food production, my country has cooperated with the countries members of the Arab Maghreb Union in elaborating a Maghreb strategy to combat desertification, in the setting-up of the Maghreb green dam project and in establishing an African network for monitoring and exchange of information in the areas of desertification and soil erosion.

At the national level, my country has taken several steps, particularly the following: First, the setting-up of administrative structures mandated to implement the policy of combating desertification, preserving and developing natural soil and water resources, in addition to expanding afforestation programmes and the development and improvement of pasture land. Second, the enactment of laws for the protection of agricultural land and natural resources such as the Land Use Act, the Water Act, the Forestry Act and other laws which aim at the preservation and development of the sustainable use of natural resources.

Many studies and researches have been carried out in the areas of surveying natural resources, categorizing types of soil and determining their possible uses under various conditions as well as developing water resources. On the basis of those studies, many dams have been built to preserve rain water and replenish underground water reservoirs with a view to expanding the arable area. Also, dams have been built in the valleys to stop soil erosion.

Millions of saplings were planted in areas that were threatened with desertification. Windbreaks have been planted to protect agricultural lands and tens of thousands of moving sand dunes have been stabilized with the use of oil products and by planting trees. The studies have proved the feasibility of transporting water from the desert areas to the coastal areas in the north with their relatively temperate climate, population density and arable land. This has led to the great man-made river project which aims at supplying nearly 6 million cubic metres of water daily for the irrigation of additional areas of agricultural land.

This would protect those areas from desertification and reinforce Libya's efforts to protect the environment.

The Prime Minister of Malaysia rightly paid tribute to this action in his statement before the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session when he stated that:

"Libya should be congratulated on tapping underground water to irrigate its desert." (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Plenary Meetings, 7th meeting, p. 91*)

My country has spared no effort over the past 25 years in combating such severe natural phenomena as drought, lack of rain and limited water resources. Expenditure on the agricultural sector has reached over \$15 billion, in addition to expenditure on the great man-made river which would cost, when completed, more than \$30 billion. The first stage has been completed. The second stage is still under way.

However, all these efforts are being hampered by two factors. The first factor is the danger of the mines which were planted in Libya's territory during the Second World War. These mines prevent the reclamation of large tracts of arable land along the coastal area. At various sessions of the General Assembly, my country has called upon the countries concerned to cooperate with us in demining those fields and to pay compensation to our people for the damage inflicted upon them.

The second factor is the unjust embargo imposed on my country by Security Council resolutions. The embargo has slowed down and, at times, paralyzed our research programmes, including those dealing with combatting desertification and other environmental phenomena.

With the necessary political will to provide financial support for the implementation of the Convention, we will achieve great results in combatting desertification and drought. Without such support, it will suffer the same fate as other international instruments in that field. We count on the cooperation and exchange of experiences on the international and regional levels.

Mr. Ladsous (France) (*interpretation from French*): France wishes to endorse the statement made by the representative of Germany on behalf of the European Union and, in particular, to associate itself with the tribute that he paid to Ambassador Kjellén and to the secretariat of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for their tireless efforts to conclude an international convention to combat desertification within the established time frame.

As the Assembly is aware, France wished to show the particular interest it has in this Convention by proposing that the last negotiating session and the signing ceremony be held in its capital. This ceremony, which took place at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational,

Scientific and Cultural Organization on 14 and 15 October, brought together representatives from 114 States and 24 United Nations agencies. On that occasion, 85 States and one organization for regional economic cooperation signed the new Convention. This success exceeded the expectations of the organizers and should facilitate the ratification and implementation of the new instrument.

With the Paris Convention we now have a pragmatic instrument which reflects our real determination to adapt ourselves to the terrain and specific characteristics of each of the regional situations.

The Convention is one of solidarity. It defines the framework for true partnership in accordance with which, first of all, the countries affected by desertification should undertake an updating of their national plans of action and, at the national level, mobilize all those involved in the implementation of the broad guidelines of the Convention.

Moreover, donors will have the possibility to improve the coordination of their efforts and to act as true partners with the countries affected.

We welcome the fact that this text provides for urgent measures for Africa because this continent, though not the only one affected, is the one hardest hit by desertification.

France will make implementation of the Convention one of its priorities in the matter of cooperation particularly in the countries of the Sahel.

It will be attentive to local initiatives and will support the implementation of national plans of action. It will support projects to mobilize populations to manage their own natural resources, in particular their water resources, and France is committed to reducing the effects of desertification on the nomadic peoples which are particularly affected.

Finally, in 1995 France will launch a new programme relating to renewable sources of energy in Africa. The objective of this programme will be to reduce the impact of domestic energy consumption on forest resources.

For all of these actions to combat desertification, my country currently earmarks F 1 billion per year. To that should be added our contribution to the World

Environment Fund, which could help in the financing of efforts to combat desertification in view of its impact on the global environment.

France hopes that this action will be based on regional solidarity, in particular through the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel. My country will contribute to the funds to assist the nine countries in that region and will mobilize additional resources to enable the Committee to assist the States of the Sahel in setting up their national plans.

Moreover, my country, whose research teams have gained knowledge and know-how in the matter of desertification, will, of course, be involved in the work of the Sahara and Sahel Observatory. The President of the Republic of France himself hailed the creation of this Observatory in 1989.

Finally, in 1997, the next surveillance satellite spot will be specially equipped with a new instrument that will facilitate the follow-up, on a continent-wide scale, of the phenomenon of desertification and regrowth of vegetation.

We need to act urgently and as I have said, my country intends to do all it can to ensure the success of the Convention. I am certain that in this struggle we will all be working in partnership.

Mr. Koshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to the Chairman, the Executive Director and the secretariat of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification (INCD) for their tireless efforts during the negotiations on the Convention on Combating Desertification.

The conclusion of the Convention is one of the positive developments towards sustainable development which the international community has been able to achieve since the Rio Conference on Environment and Development. The Islamic Republic of Iran, which has signed the Convention, wholeheartedly welcomes its conclusion and calls for its expeditious ratification by all countries in order to boost collective efforts to combat desertification. We should not lose time. Advantage should be taken of the interim period before the entry into force of the Convention to work out national and international programmes of action especially the mobilization of financial resources. In this respect, the scheduled session

of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in January 1995 is significant.

Desertification and drought are problems of global dimension, affecting almost all regions and threatening the lives and prosperity of more than 900 million people. As noted in Agenda 21, desertification and drought affects one sixth of the world's population and one quarter of the total land area of the world. A problem of such magnitude cannot be dealt with single-handedly. It can only be dealt with at the national level. There is need for concerted international cooperation to combat desertification in all its aspects.

The implementation of the Convention depends to a great extent on the provision of substantial new and additional financial resources. The United Nations Environment Programme has estimated that between \$10 billion and \$22.4 billion would be required annually for an effective 20-year global programme. This would include the cost of rehabilitating land already degraded and of preventing the further loss of fertility. As decided during the negotiations, the Global Environment Facility will serve also as the financing source for the Convention. At present, after a new replenishment of the Facility, only \$2 billion for a three-year period is pledged. This amount falls far short of the requirements of Agenda 21 itself. Therefore, unless new commitments are made, the Facility will be unable to meet the financial requirements of the programmes of action envisaged by the Convention.

I should like to discuss briefly the problem of desertification in Iran and the activities undertaken by the Government so far. About 80 percent of Iran's total land area has an arid or semi-arid climate and is thus vulnerable to desertification. Deserts account for 34 million hectares of Iran's total land area, with an average annual rainfall of 50 millimetres.

The causes of desertification are not all natural. Such factors as population growth, over-grazing and unsustainable use of rangeland, the use of wood and plants for fuel and the uncoordinated exploitation of water resources have contributed to land degradation and desertification.

To address this threatening trend, the Government has allocated large amounts of resources to desertification control activities. At the same time, specific measures are being undertaken to increase public awareness, to decrease migration to urban areas through socio-economic

development of rural ones, to protect the environment and restore the ecological conditions of degraded lands, to stabilize sand dunes and to encourage public participation. Recently a national committee was established to coordinate all the activities aimed at combating desertification. The Committee is currently involved in formulating a national programme of action for desertification control.

Taking into account the pivotal role of multilateral cooperation in this crusade, the Islamic Republic of Iran has also focused on bilateral and multilateral cooperation with interested countries and relevant international and regional organizations. Following negotiations with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the United Nations Environmental Programme, a Desertification Control Programme Office has been set up to prepare national projects, train experts and carry out research and studies on desertification.

In conclusion, while reiterating my country's commitment to international cooperation in combating desertification and drought, we call on the international community — in particular, the developed countries — to stand by their own commitments as elaborated in the Convention.

Mr. Maycock (Barbados): I have the honour to address the Assembly on behalf of the 12 States of the Caribbean Community that are members of the United Nations, namely, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and my own country, Barbados, on agenda item 89 (d), "Elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa".

The States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) fully associate themselves with the statement made by the Chairman of the Group of 77 on this issue. We wish also to pay tribute to the effective leadership of Ambassador Bo Kjellén of Sweden, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, and his Bureau, as well as the competent support provided by the Executive Secretary, Mr. Hama Arba Diallo, throughout the negotiating process.

That process, set in train by a specific decision taken at Rio de Janeiro and by the mandate given in General Assembly resolution 47/188, has culminated in the adoption of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in

Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. Last weekend, in Paris, 87 countries signed the Convention. Given its critical importance to the countries affected, we support the call for prompt action to ensure its early entry into force.

While the Convention that has been adopted did not meet all of our expectations, we nevertheless believe that it represents an important advance in the international community's efforts to address a major problem that carries with it serious adverse consequences both for the environment and for development.

In our view, the Convention is a balanced document that recognizes the complex dimensions of the problem of desertification as involving not only physical and biological factors but also those of a political, social, cultural or economic character, and that advocates integrated response strategies based on community participation and partnership at the local, national, regional and international levels.

Important recognition is given to the effects of desertification and drought on the sustainable development efforts of affected developing countries and on the interrelationship of these effects with the issues of poverty, population, health and nutrition, food security and migration. Similar attention is paid to the effect of international economic and trade conditions on the ability of affected countries to combat desertification adequately. The triangular approach and the focus on the elaboration of action programmes through the widest possible consultation, participation, and coordination are important features of the Convention, which we commend.

The clear emphasis given to the catastrophic dimensions of the problem of desertification in Africa in both the Convention and the relevant regional implementation annex are, in our view, completely justified, and we fully support the content of the Committee's resolution on urgent action for Africa. At the same time we are heartened by the recognition given to the global nature of the problem through the conclusion of implementation annexes for other affected regions, which take into account their particular conditions. Desertification and drought are of serious concern to several of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, and we welcome the specific provisions of the implementation annex for our wider region.

Desertification is a global phenomenon from which no country can consider itself immune. It affects 25 percent of the world's lands and 900 million of its people. While we in the Caribbean have been spared the ravages of desertification in its extreme form, we have of late become increasingly exposed to the effects of persistent drought, which has this year caused severe damage to the agricultural sector and adversely affected the water supply of many of our countries. Climate change and climate variability, which perhaps share a causal link with desertification, may have been contributing factors.

The preventive and remedial experiences of others in our region and beyond, particularly in the area of land, water and crop management, are therefore of considerable interest to us, and in this regard we welcome the emphasis placed on strengthening the functioning of the global network of institutions and facilities for the collection, analysis and exchange of data and information.

It is the hope of the CARICOM member States that the seriousness with which the international community applied itself to the task of elaborating the Convention will be matched by a clear demonstration of the necessary political will in the implementation stage. For, like Agenda 21 itself and the other Conventions and processes to which it gave rise, the desertification Convention will be critically dependent for its successful implementation on the provision by the international community of adequate financial resources, access to relevant technologies, and appropriate measures for capacity-building. In this regard, we look forward to the elaboration by the Conference of the Parties of the modalities to govern the global mechanism established by the Convention.

The States members of CARICOM have taken careful note of the report presented by the Secretary-General in document A/49/477, which gives a clear picture of the considerable preparatory work, both procedural and substantive, that must be undertaken pending the entry into force of the Convention and the convening of the first Conference of the Parties. Many important initiatives can be set in train during the interim period to ensure the early and effective operation of the Convention once it enters into force. We are confident that the General Assembly will take the necessary action at this session to enable the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee and the interim secretariat to carry out their tasks towards this end.

Mr. Erdenechuluun (Mongolia): At the outset, I wish to express my delegation's sincere gratitude to Ambassador Bo Kjellén of Sweden, Chairman of the

Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, for his outstanding contribution to the elaboration of the International Convention to Combat Desertification. We owe our gratitude also to Mr. Hama Arba Diallo, Executive Secretary of the Negotiating Committee, and his staff for their excellent work, which was instrumental in the timely adoption, on 18 June 1994, of the Convention.

We believe that this Convention is a valuable addition to the Rio environmental treaties — the Conventions on climate change and biodiversity — and represents a solid basis for our future activities. What is required now is an adequate response on the part of all actors, at both the national and the international levels, to implement the provisions of this Convention. Taken together, these international instruments will help solve the world's major environmental problems.

Mongolia welcomes the adoption of the Convention and its signature by a large number of States and is looking forward to its prompt entry into force and its subsequent effective implementation. Mongolia was one of the first to sign the Convention in Paris. We believe that the Convention is an important means of promoting international cooperation, harmonizing national, regional and international efforts, and mobilizing resources for tackling one of the most serious environmental problems facing the world today.

Mongolia is particularly pleased that the Convention addresses the underlying causes of desertification, including human behaviour and environmental and socio-economic factors. The Convention's great significance lies in the fact that it is based on the premise of the interdependence of environmental and development problems. Desertification represents a major barrier to sustainable food security and threatens the livelihood of many millions of people around the world; hence the imperative need for international cooperation to confront this challenge resolutely.

My delegation considers it important that the momentum created by the adoption of the Convention be sustained. It is in this context that I wish to commend the specific ideas and proposals made in the Secretary-General's report (A/49/477) in regard to future arrangements for the work during the interim period leading to the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. A considerable amount of preparatory work will have to be carried out if that Conference is to be successful. A great deal will no

doubt depend also on actions at the national, subregional and regional levels. Here, one cannot overemphasize the importance of a new approach reflected in the Convention, which focuses, *inter alia*, on a "bottom-up" philosophy involving the participation of local populations and non-governmental organizations in the preparation and implementation of action programmes, as well as on the concept of partnership agreements bringing together affected countries, the developed and other countries, and international organizations in the attainment of common objectives.

The mobilization of adequate financial resources is a most important prerequisite to the effective implementation of the Convention. In this regard, my delegation wishes to commend the recent aid packages announced by the donor community at a high-level meeting in Paris. However, we cannot fail to stress time and again the importance of new and additional resources.

We hope that the establishment by the Convention of a global mechanism will help raise substantial financial resources, including those for the transfer of technology to affected developing countries. It has been recognized that the land-degradation issues, primarily desertification and deforestation, would be eligible for financing by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Hence, it will be one of the mechanisms and sources of financing the implementation of the Convention. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee and the GEF should, in our view, already start cooperative action during the interim period.

Desertification, drought and deforestation are of major concern to Mongolia as well. One third of our territory is desert, as defined in the Convention. There is also a large portion of land which is highly vulnerable to desertification. The edge of the southern arid region is moving northward at the rate of about 50 metres per year. Drought, which is a frequently occurring phenomenon in our country, affects half of its entire territory and represents a great burden on our economy. Creeping desertification is having an increasingly destabilizing effect on the country's biological diversity.

In order to address these problems adequately, Mongolia adopted in 1992 a National Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. It was drawn up with an emphasis on preventive policies and actions against desertification, taking into account long-term and cost-saving benefits. To implement this Plan of Action, a Gobi Desert Development Centre was set up to study the ecological situation of the Gobi desert and the natural anthropogenetic factors of

change as well as control of ecological balance; formulate practical measures to combat desertification and organize research work for environmental monitoring in desert areas; and elaborate a strategy for the sustainable economic and social development of arid areas.

It goes without saying that, as in other developing countries, practical implementation of these projects requires national capacity-building coupled with scientific and technological cooperation with other countries and international organizations. Mongolia is looking forward to meaningful deliberations on this important issue at this session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): The Tunisian delegation would like first to express its satisfaction at the adoption and signing by a large number of countries of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa.

The binding nature of this multilateral agreement is a positive step in the implementation of commitments made at the Rio Summit. We are therefore at a decisive turning-point in the efforts of the countries concerned and of the whole international community to find appropriate, lasting solutions to the scourge of desertification.

With the impending implementation of the Convention, the States parties, with the help of all the organizations concerned, have managed in a short time, just two years after Rio, to give themselves an instrument to combat this natural phenomenon, which is a considerable hindrance to development in a number of developing countries, particularly in Africa.

Tunisia, whose borders are being eaten into by the desert, is genuinely optimistic that the objectives of the Convention will be realized. An effective and dynamic world partnership is capable of curbing desertification, which threatens ecological balance and nullifies development efforts.

The importance that the African continent attaches to the Convention's implementation cannot be overemphasized. The continent's interest in the matter was expressed yet again at the most recent Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit, held in Tunis in June this year, when the African States committed themselves to setting up the structures needed to implement the Convention and the annex relating to Africa.

Owing to the scale of the phenomenon of desertification and its devastating effects, which impinge on many areas, the African States realize that alone they do not have the capacity to wage an effective struggle against it without help. The struggle to which we are committed calls for technical and financial inputs that the affected countries cannot provide on their own. Therefore, the Convention should be a means of mobilizing the potential of the countries concerned while tapping international financial and technical assistance commensurate with the scale of the worldwide phenomenon of desertification and its threat to life on Earth.

In this regard, I am pleased to stress that Tunisia has already taken extensive action to protect the environment threatened by creeping desertification. The national strategy, with several years' experience behind it, has been bolstered by the recommendations of the Rio Summit. The tool for managing this strategy, called "*Main Jaune*", is based on integrated development through close cooperation between various ministerial departments and effective participation by local communities and populations that are affected.

Tunisia, which has considerable experience and expertise in this area, can contribute by putting that experience and expertise at the disposal of brother African countries. This brotherly cooperation can be an effective means of pushing back the advance of desertification, a scourge which endangers natural wealth and life in several regions of our continent.

As it assumes the chairmanship of OAU, Tunisia would like to remind the international community and the relevant international, regional and non-governmental organizations of the seriousness of problems connected with drought and desertification and of the need for perseverance in solving them. The assistance that the African continent urgently needs requires us all — donor countries in particular — to give the question of desertification the importance it merits as a worldwide environmental problem with serious implications for development.

As the problem far exceeds the potential of the countries affected, the Republic of Tunisia has taken the initiative, through its President, Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, of proposing a series of practical mechanisms for international cooperation based on the necessary North-South solidarity. They include recycling debt into projects to protect the environment and ensure sustainable development.

Tunisia's interest in the question of desertification is encouraged by the success of the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of the Convention. Here I should like to pay tribute to Mr. Bo Kjellén, who chaired the Committee, and Mr. Arba Diallo, the Executive Secretary, who, through their perseverance and their combined efforts, contributed to the success of the negotiations between the various parties.

Mr. Karukubiro Kamunanwire (Uganda): My delegation is grateful for the opportunity to participate in the debate on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. This Convention is a vital link in the elaboration of legally binding instruments to save our globe.

I should like also to express our sincere gratitude to the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Committee's report (A/49/84 and Add.1 and 2). We also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his related report (A/49/477).

In 1908 Winston Churchill described my country, Uganda, as "the pearl of Africa", as a land that was

"from end to end one beautiful garden, where the staple food of the people grows almost without labour."

The country at that time knew no drought, no famine and, indeed, no poverty. The livelihood of our people was sustainable. Today drought, famine and poverty have become an endemic problem. Food security can no longer be taken for granted. Poverty has contributed to unsustainable agricultural practices and environmentally harmful use of our forest resources, which, in turn, have led to drought and desertification.

This situation typifies a phenomenon that is taking place worldwide. According to available statistics, the degradation of dry lands threatens the livelihood and food security of more than 900 million people in over 100 countries. The process of desertification now affects one quarter of the global population. In Africa, over 70 per cent of agricultural dry lands are already degraded, while more than 60 per cent of the land is already desert or dry land. These sad trends will certainly spur the loss of biological diversity, cause climatic change, trigger migrations and add to an already overburdened

international community unquantifiable demand in humanitarian assistance.

According to the United Nations Environment Programme, approximately \$1 billion is spent annually on desertification programmes. The threshold level for funding an effective anti-desertification campaign is estimated at between \$10 billion and \$22.4 billion per annum for the next 20 years. Meanwhile, desertification is estimated to cost \$42 billion in agricultural income annually. Against this background, the case for new and additional funding is compelling and must be recognized.

Uganda welcomed the General Assembly's timely establishment, in resolution 47/188, of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee. A long and arduous negotiating process followed. Uganda participated actively in that process, which culminated in the conclusion of the Convention in Paris on 18 June this year.

My delegation welcomes the priority accorded to Africa in the Convention. In that regard, we were particularly encouraged by the resolution adopted by the Negotiating Committee on urgent action for Africa for the interim period. By that resolution, the international community committed itself to providing tangible support to Africa during the interim period. Regrettably, the response from the international community at the signing ceremony in Paris, on 14 and 15 October, was lukewarm. I wish to make a special appeal to the international community to respond favourably to the commitments undertaken in Paris in support of Africa, especially with regard to the provision of financing, technology and other resources needed for the effective implementation of the Convention.

Uganda, for its part, concluded a Natural Environment Action Plan that provides a national policy framework to address environmental concerns. We also undertook a case study in the area of desertification. We are now finalizing the preparation of specific project profiles drawn from priority areas in the case study. The project profiles clearly define our own contribution towards their implementation as well as the additional resources needed from donors and the international community to support our endeavours. As regards the signing of the Convention, the necessary legislative procedures have been completed, and we will sign the Convention shortly here in New York.

We remain committed to the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development

(IGADD) to address the problem of desertification in our subregion and have participated actively in various IGADD consultations to elaborate subregional projects on desertification. We appeal to the international community to support our subregional and regional efforts.

For the interim period, it is necessary that effective measures be put into place in preparation for the entry into force of the Convention. The interim secretariat should be facilitated in undertaking transitional activities until the permanent secretariat of the Convention is designated by the Conference of the Parties. Equally, other critical institutional and substantive issues such as financing mechanisms and the terms of reference of the Committee on Science and Technology should be agreed upon at the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. For these to be realized, it is necessary that adequate human and financial resources be mobilized to support the interim arrangements. We therefore wish to echo the Secretary-General's appeal for such support.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that desertification is a global problem that requires global solutions. For us to succeed, the international community must marshal the political will and resolve to address this problem.

Mr. Ayewah (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation would like to contribute to the debate on agenda item 89 (d), "Elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa", and to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report (A/49/477) dated 5 October 1994. My delegation also wishes to associate itself with the statement made on the subject by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

In paying tribute to the Government of France for hosting the fifth and final session of the Negotiating Committee and for providing facilities for the initial signing ceremony of the Convention, which took place in Paris last week, we wish to underscore the continuing relevance of international efforts to combat the ravages of the natural phenomena of desertification and drought. We thank Ambassador Bo Kjellén of Sweden, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, the members of the Bureau and the United Nations Secretariat for their diligence and hard work throughout the negotiation process.

The most significant accomplishment of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on the desertification process, therefore, is the international attention that has been mobilized around this problem. The negotiation of the Convention has been a success in linking those affected by desertification with donors, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations. The negotiation process of the Convention undoubtedly laid the foundation for future global partnership arrangements to combat desertification.

Let me also say that the journey of the Convention on Desertification started in June 1992 in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and following the adoption of Agenda 21 by the international community. Nigeria welcomes the conclusion of the International Convention to Combat Desertification and looks forward to its entry into force. We have taken note of the fact that the Convention addresses major environmental problems and provides a framework that departs largely from the past inadequate arrangements made by the international community to address the problem. However, our preferred option would have been the institutionalization of the spirit of Rio by having a fifth window, for Desertification, in the Global Environmental Facility, in order to ensure predictability, transparency and coordination of funds at all levels.

In this regard, we recall that it was the lack of financial support by the international community that led to the failure of the Nairobi Plan of Action to combat desertification, which was adopted in 1977.

Many countries in Africa, including Nigeria, are seriously affected by desertification and drought. Most of these countries fall within the category of least developed countries, which have inadequate resources to confront the environmental hardships occasioned by these scourges. There is therefore an urgent need to check the vicious cycle of poverty attendant on land degradation.

It is against this background that we call on the international community to provide the necessary additional financial resources and technological assistance to complement national efforts in order to combat desertification and drought, preserve the ecosystem and prevent further environmental degradation, particularly in Africa.

In conclusion, Nigeria hopes that the Convention will enjoy universal support so that it can justify the purpose of its adoption and be a complement to the Conventions on climate change and biodiversity.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.



General Assembly

Forty-ninth Session

43rd Meeting

Tuesday, 25 October 1994, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Essy (Côte D'Ivoire)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 25

The situation in Burundi: draft resolution (A/49/L.10)

The President (*interpretation from French*): I call on the representative of the Gambia to introduce the draft resolution before the Assembly.

Mr. Jallow (Gambia): On behalf of its sponsors in the African Group and other sponsors, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to the General Assembly draft resolution A/49/L.10 on the situation in Burundi, which is before the Assembly for consideration.

One year after the assassination of Burundi's first democratically elected President, which precipitated mass killings, with thousands of lives lost, political turmoil and instability in Burundi, the time has come to assess the contribution of the international community.

There is no need to recall the negative impact of the even greater calamity that struck Rwanda this year. The action initiated to halt the Rwandan genocide and its refugee overspill to neighbouring countries has been characterized as "too little, too late".

The African Heads of State and Government gathered in Tunisia recognized the necessity of engineering a concerted solution to alleviate the adverse consequences of the ethnic turmoil in Rwanda and Burundi. Obviously, the

extreme needs of the refugees, returnees and displaced persons in the Great Lakes region have never been properly addressed. The international community is bound to take steps if such sad conflicts are to be totally eradicated in the area and elsewhere.

The time has come to tackle the critical issue of the refugees, returnees and displaced persons in a more global and human way. The suggestion to hold a regional conference should be commended. The Government of Burundi, which is keen to have a more balanced intercommunal relationship, needs support. The key areas for which immediate action is requested are underlined in the draft resolution under consideration. We are confident that the proposals put forward in the text will receive the fullest support of all Member States. I therefore ask that the draft resolution be adopted without a vote. That would send a clear message of solidarity to all the peace forces in Burundi and be a serious admonition to all destabilizing forces in that country and in the region.

I should like now to read out the list of additional sponsors of the draft resolution: Austria, Belgium, Cambodia, Denmark, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Mali, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Togo, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): Tunisia, in its capacity as current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) welcomes with

great satisfaction the recent political developments in Burundi that were reflected in the signing of the Convention on Governance by virtually all political parties and the election of a President, by Parliament, thus opening the way to a new era of joint efforts and dialogue in the country.

The leaders of the parties that signed the Convention on Governance demonstrated great wisdom by that act and showed that the people of Burundi is able to proceed responsibly in order to overcome the crisis. Although some institutional matters are still pending, we are convinced that the same spirit that prevailed in order to reach the results already achieved will surely allow the remaining problems to be resolved.

One cannot fail here to hail the role played by the international community in helping Burundi overcome its difficulties. In this regard, we wish to express our esteem and congratulations to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, on the fruitful mediation efforts he undertook with those involved in Burundi politics.

For its part the Organization of African Unity has spared no effort to restore confidence in the people and to avoid a worsening of the situation in the country. Thus there has been a series of pan-African good offices initiatives in Burundi and an OAU mission was dispatched, with a military component deployed in the five regions of the country.

Furthermore, following the Tunis summit, OAU's central body for the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts in Africa, met in Sousse, Tunisia from 3 to 4 August 1994 to deal with the situation in Burundi. It urged the Government, the army, the political parties and civilian society to pursue the path of dialogue and to engage in a genuine process of peace, reconciliation and national unity. The central body moreover welcomed the positive role played by the OAU mission in Burundi in the peace process, and the cooperation that the Government, the army and the political parties had shown to that mission.

We hope that this cooperation will continue and be further increased for the good not only of the people of Burundi but also of all countries in the region.

In this respect we must emphasize the importance of cooperation between the OAU and the United Nations in order to promote a favourable climate for lasting national reconciliation in the country. This cooperation would stand

to gain by further coordination of the efforts made by the two organizations and also by giving effective support to the central body of the OAU so that it can effectively carry out its role in the maintenance of peace.

Despite the political progress in Burundi, the security situation remains precarious. Some extremist parties are continuing to incite the population to violence and hatred and refuse to go along with the consensus, thereby creating an atmosphere of fear and suspicion in the country. To counteract these extremists and to prevent them from succeeding in their destructive goals, the people of Burundi are called upon to strengthen their cohesion and increase their determination to go forward with the peace process.

The problem of refugees in Burundi continues to be a source of major concern because of its clear economic, social and political implications on the situation in that country. It is urgent for the international community to give substantial support to the Burundi Government to help it to face this situation.

At their summit meeting held in Tunis, the African Heads of State and Government emphasized the need to provide increased assistance to the host countries — in particular those countries which for a long time have been hosting refugees on their territory — in order to remedy the deterioration in their economy and their environment and to mitigate the harmful effects on public services and the development process. In the course of the summit meeting, they also reaffirmed their willingness to continue to deal with the deeper causes of the problems of refugees and displaced persons. To this end, they emphasized the urgency of convening a regional conference — in Bujumbura — on assistance to refugees, repatriated persons and displaced persons in the region of the Great Lakes.

We repeat here the appeal which the African Heads of State and Government launched to the effect that all Members of the United Nations and members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations having competence in this matter should contribute to the process of developing a plan of action and a programme of assistance to refugees, repatriated persons and displaced persons in the Great Lakes region.

We are joining in sponsoring the draft resolution before us since we feel that it is in perfect accord with the demands of the situation in Burundi.

Mr. Ntakibirora (Burundi) (*interpretation from French*): I must share with the Assembly some thoughts that the Government of the Republic of Burundi wishes to contribute to the discussion under agenda item 25, entitled "The situation in Burundi". Holding this debate today is symbolic since it marks the first anniversary of the 3297th meeting of the Security Council, held on 25 October 1993, at which the question of Burundi was addressed. The meeting took place right after the bloody *coup d'état* of 21 October 1993, which decapitated the democracy emerging in Burundi and plunged the country into the horrors of inter-ethnic massacres. The tragic succession of events, one more appalling than the next, is familiar history. It is a tragic story written in the blood of the innocent, both Hutu and Tutsi, who died to no avail as the result of the great folly of intransigence, intolerance and the blindness of certain individuals who were committed to anachronistic battles unworthy of our century.

Burundi is today emerging from a political and ethnic crisis unprecedented in its history, a crisis whose psychological, institutional, economic and social aftermaths have not yet been fully overcome. The trauma still felt by the population as a result of this crisis has cast doubt on the ability of Burundi to mend the national fabric that has been so radically torn apart. More than 50,000 people have died, victims of their ethnic origin or their membership in a different political party. There has been unspeakable destruction of goods and property, of housing, of infrastructure and socio-economic equipment which had been acquired with difficulty. The environment has been particularly hard hit by the fact that thousands of people are living in catastrophic circumstances. Camps for displaced persons have been set up almost everywhere around the country. Some have found shelter in community centres, schools and hospitals, while others have hidden in the mountains, in the swamps and in the bush. Just as many have fled to neighbouring countries.

As noted in the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, many others have fled to neighbouring countries. He stated that:

"Upheavals in Burundi provoked the most dramatic refugee exodus of 1993, with some 580,000 people have seeking refuge in Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zaire." (A/49/12, para. 92).

The people of Burundi have had to delve deep into their age-old resources of wisdom and culture to cope with this onslaught. They have understood that they had been

abused by politicians greedy for power who refuse to share national responsibilities or accept the alternation of political power, fearing dangers which are more often imaginary than real but with deadly consequences. The rule of constitutional law and the calming of spirits began only when the protagonists realized that in civil war everyone is a loser.

It will be recalled that this was the atmosphere prevailing at the time of the aircraft accident that took place on 6 April 1994 in Kigali, Rwanda, in which the President of the Republic, Mr. Cyprien Ntaryamira, the President of the Republic of Rwanda and several of their entourage died.

This tragic death of the two Heads of State served as a trigger for the dramatic events which plunged the country into bloodshed and mourning. The magnitude, nature and extent of the massacres which followed altered the landscape of Rwanda and that of the Great Lakes region.

Even though the Government and people of Rwanda were able to contain their profound distress after the tragic loss of President Ntaryamira and thus avoid getting caught up in the dynamics of the Rwandan tragedy, peace and security have not been fully safeguarded. In his latest report (S/1994/1152) to the Security Council on the situation in Burundi, dated 11 October 1994), the Secretary-General very eloquently described the complex nature of the political situation, the security problems and the humanitarian crisis besetting Burundi today.

We welcome the signing of the agreement embodying a convention on governance between the forces for democratic change - made up of the political parties in power and the opposition political parties - which took place on 10 September in Bujumbura. If this agreement is strictly respected by all the parties, it contains sufficient guarantees to ensure a rapid restoration of peace and security as well as of trust among the various components of the people of Burundi, which has been profoundly undermined by the crisis. With constant support from the international community, the consensus institutions, the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the coalition government will be in a position to secure, once and for all, the domestic stability which is essential in order to commit the country to the path of reconciliation and reconstruction.

The tasks confronting the new coalition government are tremendous. International assistance is necessary.

Through the Group of 77 my delegation intends to submit another draft resolution calling for special emergency assistance.

We have reached the conclusion that there cannot be viable and lasting political stabilization in Burundi if measures are not taken at the same time to ensure regional stabilization.

Recent developments in the political and social situation in Burundi and in Rwanda have highlighted a new phenomenon that threatens the peace and security of the Great Lakes region: massive and uncontrollable movements of people, which are creating increasingly difficult situations in host countries such as Tanzania, Zaire, and Uganda. Between April and July 1994 Burundi faced a constant flow of trans-border refugees and the presence of approximately 700,000 displaced people within the country. Thousands of refugees from Burundi who had found shelter in Rwanda before and during the October 1993 crisis returned to Burundi because of the heavy fighting that had broken out in Rwanda. The defeat of the former Rwandese armed forces by the Rwandese Patriotic Front resulted in an exodus of approximately 250,000 Rwandese refugees to north-east Burundi, giving rise to new needs and security problems for Burundi. Everyone remembers the unbearable pictures of the victims of the cholera epidemic that decimated the Rwandese refugees in the congested camps in Goma and Bukavu in Zaire, and the anguish in the Bonaco camp in Tanzania, the largest refugee camp in the world, which was set up in just a few days. And these are just a few examples of the plight of these refugees.

We believe that our Governments are duty-bound to help these unfortunate victims. We must restore their reason for living, for hoping and for rebuilding their lives. In their wisdom, the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), during their thirtieth summit Conference, in Tunisia, adopted resolution CM/Res.1527 (LX), on the holding of a regional conference on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced people in the Great Lakes region. This regional conference, initiated by Burundi, will take place in Bujumbura, Burundi. The massive presence of armed populations, which can arouse tensions likely to degenerate into armed conflict, makes the holding of this conference urgent. Since 13 October 1994, Burundi has experienced a number of attacks from heavily armed assailants, which have disrupted security in Cibitoke and Ngozi provinces, bordering Zaire and Rwanda. These criminals attacked the forces of order and the displaced people's camps, thus hindering the procedures set in motion by the Government

to persuade those people who had fled to Zaire or Rwanda to come back to their homes. Having carried out their attacks, the criminals returned to the neighbouring countries.

Regrettably, the international tribunal envisaged to try persons who committed crimes of genocide in Rwanda has not yet been established; had it come into being with all the requisite rights and powers, it would have been able to prosecute these criminals without any delay.

The objective of the planned conference is to bring together representatives of all the States of the region, of the OAU and of the United Nations that have an interest in these problems in order to look into the fundamental causes of these mass population movements and draw up a plan of action and an agreed programme of assistance to the refugees, returnees and displaced people in the region. Experts - political scientists, historians, ethnologists, anthropologists, sociologists and so forth - from the region or from outside will participate in the efforts to find explanations and will help devise solutions that can put an end to the cycles of ethnic violence that are at the root of the appalling situation in the region. The results of this process of reflection should enable the political decision-makers to determine what needs to be done in order to prevent a recurrence of the tragedies of Rwanda and Burundi. This conference could help humanitarian organizations and non-governmental organizations which are well known for their effectiveness and their commitment to humanitarian assistance and which are already functioning in the region, or wish to participate in this operation, to coordinate their activities.

The General Assembly should endorse the concerns expressed by the African Heads of State; reaffirm the importance of the participation of the States Members of the United Nations in, and their contribution to the success of, the regional conference at Bujumbura; and call on donors to fund the assistance programme that will be established as a result of its deliberations.

We are happy to note that it has been clearly recognized by the Secretary-General of the United Nations that the problems besetting Rwanda and Burundi are regional problems. We welcome his complementary initiative designed to explore the feasibility of convening an international conference to study the region's problems, and we invite him to cooperate, for the sake of efficiency, with the Secretary-General of the OAU, who

is responsible for coordinating the regional conference at Bujumbura. As Burundi's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation stated from this rostrum on 12 October in his address to the Assembly, we hope that this international conference will be convened and that its themes will be peace, security and development in the African Great Lakes region.

In the meantime, the coalition Government of Burundi will be tackling the tremendous tasks of national reconciliation and reconstruction. It has decided to hold at the beginning of 1995 a national substantive debate on all the problems hampering relations between the two major components of the nation of Burundi. We hope that this dialogue will be candid and dispassionate so that we can find genuinely Burundian formulas for a healthy and fair democracy in keeping with Burundi's social and political realities.

As the Secretary-General of our Organization has rightly emphasized in the report to which I referred earlier, Burundi is a unique challenge for the international community, which must recognize its moral obligation to ensure that the Rwandese tragedy is not repeated on a similar or larger scale in Burundi. A number of areas of assistance to Burundi have been identified; what needs to be done is to support our efforts to ensure the success of programmes for reconstruction, for rebuilding trust among the people of Burundi, for strengthening the country's judicial system, and for combating extremists of all kinds.

In our view, we should no longer devote attention to certain suggestions which were made by the Secretary-General on 18 August 1994 and which have been placed once again before the international community for consideration. I refer to such ideas as the creation of a "humanitarian base" at Bujumbura airport; the maintenance of a military presence in Zaire that would be capable of intervening rapidly if the situation in Burundi suddenly worsened; and the deployment of guards, on the Iraqi model, responsible for protecting the personnel of the humanitarian organizations operating in Burundi.

In our opinion, the feasibility and coherence of these proposals and their compatibility with the provisions of the Convention recently signed in Burundi should be looked into. The Government of Burundi has no doubts about the ultimate effectiveness of the actions proposed in the Convention. It believes, however, that the sums that would be expended in this context could be directed more beneficially towards the priority areas for cooperation outlined in draft resolution A/49/L.10, now before the

Assembly. We urge the Secretary-General and the High Commissioners for Refugees and Human Rights, respectively, to submit to the Assembly at the appropriate time coherent plans for financing the emergency measures required by the situation in Burundi.

There is a wise saying that it is very difficult to see drops of sweat on the forehead of a man labouring in the rain. It is likely that the efforts of the leaders and people of Burundi are not sufficiently recognized or assessed at their true worth. It is nonetheless true that the people of Burundi have done a great deal to establish mutual trust, save their democracy and establish a climate that bodes well for a better future. All they ask of the international community is understanding, support and succour.

Mr. Rudolph (Germany): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union and of Austria.

When the General Assembly discussed the situation in Burundi at its forty-eighth session, the first democratically elected President of Burundi had been assassinated a month earlier. The period that followed was marked by violence and atrocities against ethnic and political groups. When President Ntaryamira assumed office in February 1994, it seemed that the situation in Burundi might stabilize. However, tensions rose again after his death and that of the President of Rwanda in April.

We warmly welcomed the investiture of President Sylvestre Ntibantunganya on 1 October and the formation of a new Government. This is the culmination of a long and difficult process in which political parties, the civilian population and moral forces in Burundi worked together to establish institutions and mechanisms capable of tackling the grave crisis that began a year ago. We have noted the spirit of reconciliation in which the political consultations took place and pay tribute to those who exerted efforts to that end.

The European Union and Austria express the hope that the dialogue established will strengthen the democratic principles on which Burundi must build its future. We emphasize that the commitments made by the various political partners must be honoured and that the new Head of State and the new Government should be able to rely on the support of all. We also trust that the new leaders will take measures to ensure the peace and security so arduously aspired to by the people of Burundi.

The European Union and Austria pay tribute to the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr. Ould Abdallah, who played a central role in facilitating the all-party talks held prior to the investiture of the new President. We have supported the efforts made by the Organization of African Unity, which, among other things, has dispatched a mission of military observers to Burundi. States members of the European Union have provided financial and logistical assistance to this mission.

The Security Council is following events in Burundi closely. This is a sign of the heightened international awareness of Burundi's problems and has helped to create a climate conducive to the negotiations between the Burundian parties. In this respect, the European Union and Austria endorse the most recent statement made by the President of the Security Council.

The country's economic and social recovery will undoubtedly require the mobilization of all available energies. In this connection, we reaffirm our willingness to provide appropriate and diversified aid to support the effort which will be made in close consultation with other bilateral or multilateral partners to ensure, in the requisite climate of stability, the development of the entire nation and the well-being of the people of Burundi. Preparations are being made to resume gradually development cooperation with Burundi, including balance-of-payments support. In parallel, the European Union is continuing its intensive humanitarian aid. States members of the European Union and Austria are also ready to lend support to measures to be taken to foster tolerance and the protection of human rights.

The situation of refugees in the entire region is of great concern. Close to 1 million Burundis have either fled the country or are internally displaced. The tragic events in neighbouring Rwanda have provoked the exodus of more than 2 million people. Following the visit to the region by Cooperation Ministers of the European Union troika, the European Union has decided to initiate a regional programme for the repair of economic, ecological and social damage in those countries bordering Rwanda which have been particularly affected by the refugee crisis.

The European Union and Austria support the Secretary-General's recommendation, as endorsed by the Security Council, to convene an international conference on the problems of the subregion, including the refugee problem. We also welcome the fact that the African Heads of State, at their summit in Tunis in June, decided to

launch a similar initiative. We hope that such a conference will be held as soon as possible.

We have witnessed the unfolding of an extreme tragedy in Burundi, and subsequently an even greater one in Rwanda. Today, the picture looks brighter than it has for a long time. The process of democratization has resumed, but the new institutions are still fragile. Reconciliation in Burundi and moral, political and financial support from the outside will be necessary to bring the reinitiated process to a good end. We are prepared to give our share. It is in this spirit that we are cosponsoring the draft resolution before the Assembly. We hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Biørn Lian (Norway) (*interpretation from French*): I should like to say, first of all, that I listened with keen interest to the statement made earlier by the representative of Burundi. His words, it seems to me, were marked by a true desire to see his country develop harmoniously along the lines supported by the international community. We have taken careful note of the contents of that statement.

(*spoke in English*)

In my statement today, I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and Norway.

Let me say at the outset that it is most timely that the General Assembly should give its attention and support to Burundi, a fragile democracy faced with particular problems and challenges.

The Nordic countries support the views just expressed by the presidency of the European Union. Like the European Union, we underline that

"moral, political and financial support from the outside will be necessary to bring the reinitiated process to a good end" (*supra*, p. 6).

Burundi, a country passing through a critical stage in the process of building democracy, needs the support and encouragement of the international community.

In this connection, there is reason to compliment the political forces in Burundi on the re-establishment of governing institutions, including the investiture of the President and the formation of a new Government. The

degree of flexibility that enabled this to be done in a peaceful manner gives hope for the future.

We welcome the constructive manner in which the Special Representative, Mr. Ould Abdallah, has helped to facilitate the all-party talks. We further support the efforts made by the Organization of African Unity, including its conflict-resolution mechanism. Hopefully, this international presence has helped to impress on potential perpetrators that the international community views with the utmost seriousness threats of violence against the process of negotiated change.

Although the situation in Burundi is thus not without encouraging signs, the picture is still not as positive as could be wished for. Reports about continuing violence are deeply disturbing. Strife and tension have given rise to massive human-rights violations. We deplore the continuing acts of intimidation and violence, and we underline the importance of bringing those responsible to justice. We encourage the Government to address the potential problem of the displaced persons and to facilitate their speedy return. On the continent of Africa, Governments have taken a number of initiatives to promote the rule of law, democratization and political pluralism. We trust that the new Government of Burundi will join in these efforts.

We pay tribute to initiatives taken by the Secretary-General, *inter alia*, through the dispatch of special missions and through his Special Representative. The proposals suggested by the Security Council in its statement of 21 October this year should be speedily followed up. Building peace and confidence where hostility and unrest have prevailed calls for deliberate and long-term efforts.

The Nordic countries, in a spirit of solidarity, have played their part in providing assistance to the people of Burundi and will continue to do so, both through the United Nations and on a bilateral basis. Although the key to the solution of Burundi's problems lies with that country's people themselves, they deserve the full support of the international community. Events in Rwanda have clearly underscored the importance of preventive action. In the words of the Secretary-General,

"Burundi constitutes a unique challenge for the international community, which is morally obliged to take action to ensure that the tragic events in Rwanda are not repeated in Burundi". (S/1994/1152, para. 47).

Any delay in providing assistance could easily lead to a further dangerous deterioration of the economic and social fabric.

The Nordic countries are pleased to support the draft resolution before us and hope that it will be adopted by consensus. We would particularly like to give our support to the proposal made by the Government of Burundi in the fourteenth preambular paragraph that the regional conference to be convened should study all the aspects of this problem, which is disrupting the plans and programmes for political stabilization of the Great Lakes region, and should not be confined to the question of refugees and displaced persons. We welcome this as a development towards strengthening comprehensive approaches and comprehensive responses. The limited infrastructure and concerns about protection after years of conflict underscore the need for such a comprehensive approach. The protection of human rights must be linked with development activities, peacemaking and confidence-building measures.

In our view, regional cooperation, with support from the outside, is most essential to the progress, harmony and stability of the countries of the region. We recognize the crucial role to be played by the Organization of African Unity if this is to be achieved. The Nordic countries, for their part, will consider giving financial support for the holding of the Great Lakes regional conference and look forward to its being convened.

Mr. McKinnon (New Zealand): My delegation welcomes this opportunity to speak on the situation in Burundi. As another small country Member of this Organization and as a member of the Security Council, New Zealand has been following closely the tense and volatile conditions that have threatened that country's nascent democracy.

In this context, let me say at the outset that, despite the many warnings that Burundi was about to follow the path of its neighbour, it has so far succeeded in avoiding doing so. This is in no small measure due to the commitment of the authorities in Burundi to peace in their country, a commitment that was reiterated in the statement just made in the Assembly by the representative of Burundi. We also welcome the considerable efforts of the Organization of African Unity, which has maintained its ongoing commitment to assisting the Government of Burundi in its efforts to restore democratic institutions, rebuild confidence and stabilize the situation.

My delegation warmly welcomes the recent election and swearing in of the President, the confirmation in office of the Prime Minister and the formation of the new Government of National Unity. We call upon all parties in Burundi to cooperate closely in the important work of re-establishing democracy and stability in their country.

The draft resolution before us is an important one. It forms one part of a much wider effort to focus attention on Burundi and to enhance the presence of the international community. It follows the valuable, sensitive and effective efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Representative. It requests the enhancement of the presence of the international community. This is a means to an end; it cannot be an end in itself. The objective is for the international community to help restore stability and promote national reconciliation. In the final analysis, this can be done only by the people of Burundi themselves. However, the ongoing commitment by this Organization and by the Organization of African Unity, which recently increased its already substantial commitment to Burundi, can provide important assistance to the Government of National Unity as it confronts the critical task of reconstruction.

New Zealand has used its membership of the Security Council to promote the concept of preventive diplomacy. Our strong support for this draft resolution is firmly anchored in that concept. Our experience over the past 22 months has served to strengthen our belief that effective preventive measures can make a difference.

This draft resolution contains a number of important components of preventive diplomacy. In this respect, my delegation warmly welcomes the establishment of the technical assistance programme and the human rights office in Bujumbura. These two initiatives will go a long way towards assisting in the process of reconciliation and restoring confidence in the process of restoring democracy.

My delegation would also like to draw particular attention to the request in the draft resolution for the provision of human rights observers. This request has been endorsed by a number of international agencies. New Zealand strongly believes that human rights observers have an important role to play in helping to dispel the climate of insecurity to which the Secretary-General referred in his most recent report to the Security Council.

The plight of refugees and displaced persons in Burundi is also of considerable concern to my delegation. New Zealand commends the continuing efforts of the

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian bodies to address the terrible plight of these people. In this context, New Zealand strongly supported the Secretary-General's dispatch to Burundi of a mission led by Ambassador Dillon. This mission was designed to facilitate the preparation and holding of an international conference on the problems facing the subregion, with particular reference to the ongoing refugee problem. The Security Council has also expressed its support for such a conference, and we look forward to any specific recommendations that the Secretary-General may have as a result of this initiative.

In conclusion, New Zealand supports the draft resolution and trusts that it will be adopted by consensus.

Ms. Hassan (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation wishes to convey its thanks to the Secretary-General for his report to the Security Council on the situation in Burundi, contained in document S/1994/1152 of 11 October 1994. We support the proposals set out in that report.

We listened with interest to the representative of Burundi, who detailed his country's problems and his Government's wish to put an end to the present crisis. We hope that efforts towards reconciliation will continue and finally bear fruit.

Egypt has followed the situation in Burundi since the beginning of the crisis, and is pleased to note that a tangible positive development has taken place recently, namely the signing by the majority of the country's political parties on 10 September 1994 of an agreement to form a new Government, to amend the Constitution of Burundi and to elect an interim President. My delegation views this as the beginning of a new era of tolerance and national reconciliation among the various elements of the population of Burundi.

But despite such positive movement, a number of major security, economic, social and humanitarian problems remain to be solved. The new Government cannot cope with such problems alone, without support from the international community and the United Nations system, and without the financial and technical assistance that would make it possible to contain the negative effects of such problems, such as the refugee problem and those of the returnees and the displaced persons within the territory of the State and beyond its borders. In addition, there is the problem of disarming the militias inside the

country in order to guarantee security and restore confidence to the various elements of the Burundian population.

My delegation wishes also to support the efforts deployed to revitalize the Burundian economy and, in particular, the convening of the round-table conference scheduled for early next year in Geneva, with the participation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank. This conference will enable Burundi's partners, both African and non-African, to coordinate their economic assistance in serving the interests of Burundi's economy.

Success by the Government and people of Burundi in emerging from their present plight will depend also on the neighbouring States' willingness to ensure Burundi's security and to enable its Government to extend its authority to all the country's territory and to ensure the success of the current national reconciliation process.

With this aim in view, Egypt supports the idea of convening an international conference on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in the Great Lakes region, in so far as the security and stability of any country in the region depend on the security and stability of its neighbours. It is this organic link which makes it a must for the international community to deal with the region's humanitarian problems from the standpoint of an all-embracing regional view that takes into account the impact of the conditions in any country on its neighbours. Hence, my delegation's call for the United Nations and the agencies concerned to participate in organizing and financing such a conference.

My delegation pays tribute to the efforts deployed by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to contain the Burundian crisis and the measures it adopted in that respect, particularly the dispatch of a military observer mission to Burundi at the height of the crisis. This action had concrete positive effects that underscore the need to support regional organizations financially and technically in order for them to shoulder their responsibility more efficiently and effectively.

In conclusion, the African Group endorsed draft resolution A/49/L.10 presented by Burundi. Egypt hopes it will be adopted by consensus.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I call on the representative of Gambia, who has a point of clarification regarding the draft resolution.

Mr. Jallow (Gambia): I wish to stress that draft resolution A/49/L.10 was submitted on behalf of the entire Group of African States. In introducing the draft resolution, I named only a few African States, but that was when I read out the list of additional sponsors, which I did in order to satisfy a technical requirement relating to the co-sponsors of draft resolutions, as advised by the General Assembly secretariat. The draft resolution is fully endorsed and supported by the entire African Group.

The President (*interpretation from French*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/49/L.10.

The following countries have joined in sponsoring the draft resolution: Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and Portugal.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/49/L.10?

Draft resolution A/49/L.10 was adopted (resolution 49/7).

The President (*interpretation from French*): We shall now hear representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote or position. May I remind delegations that such explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Gallegos (United States of America): The United States has long been a supporter of efforts to consolidate democracy, bring stability and improve the plight of the refugees and displaced persons in the region. We have provided over \$60 million in humanitarian aid to Burundi since violence erupted there last October following the failed coup attempt and murder of President Ndadaye. We have also sent high-level visitors to show our support for Burundi's fragile nascent democracy. Furthermore, we are providing \$300,000 to support the comprehensive plan of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for human-rights advisory services in Burundi. We are also providing support for the 40-member monitoring forces of the Organization of African Unity.

My delegation favours the proposals contained in the resolution and endorses the convening of a regional conference to address the problems of the subregion, including assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in the Great Lakes region.

In closing, let me add my voice to the others which have called on all parties in Burundi to do their part to nurture the fragile democracy in their country.

Mr. Macedo (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Mexican delegation joined the consensus that has led to the adoption of the resolution on the situation in Burundi, since we believe that it reflects the political progress achieved in that country and the importance of the efforts being made by the international community in its attempt to contribute to the restoration of peace in Burundi.

However, we have some doubts as to the competence of the General Assembly to make pronouncements on certain other issues that figure in the resolution, for it is wholly incumbent upon the people of Burundi to find their own way towards the restoration of its institutions and of democracy.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of Burundi, who wishes to make a statement.

Mr. Ntakibirora (Burundi) (*interpretation from French*): I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to express the sincere thanks of the Government of Burundi for the support given the proposals contained in the resolution that we have just adopted. Our thanks go especially to the members of the Group of African States here in New York who initiated the draft resolution and, at the same time, we wish to express our deep gratitude to all the sponsors and the other members of the General Assembly that have just enabled it to be adopted by consensus.

I would be remiss were I to conclude without publicly congratulating the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Burundi, His Excellency Mr. Amadou Ould Abdallah of Mauritania, for the effective work he did in Burundi, often under very difficult conditions. The Government and the people of my country are determined to contribute to the emergence of a new Burundi of less shame to itself and the international community. As one of our national heroes, Prince Louis Rwagasore, said, "Judge us by our acts and your satisfaction will be our pride."

The President (*interpretation from French*): May I take it that the General Assembly has now concluded its consideration of agenda item 25?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 20

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee

Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/262)

Draft resolution (A/49/L.4)

The President (*interpretation from French*): I call upon the representative of Japan, who will introduce draft resolution A/49/L.4 in the course of his statement.

Mr. Yamada (Japan): I should like to make a brief statement on agenda item 20 now before us, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee," and then introduce a draft resolution on the agenda item, which has already been circulated as document A/49/L.4 dated 18 October 1994.

Since 1980, when the General Assembly accorded permanent observer status to the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, the United Nations has strengthened and widened the scope of cooperation with the Consultative Committee in the field of the progressive development and codification of international law and other areas of common interest to the two organizations.

The report of the Secretary-General submitted to this session in document A/49/262 amply demonstrates the significant development of the cooperative relationship, particularly for the past two years since 1992 when the Assembly last considered this same agenda item. Forty-four countries from Asia and Africa, States members of the Consultative Committee, are satisfied with these achievements.

In January of this year the Government of Japan acted as host to the annual meeting of the Consultative Committee at Tokyo. It has now become a tradition that various United Nations bodies be represented at this annual meeting. During the Tokyo meeting a special meeting was held with assistance from the World Bank on the legal issues involved in the privatization of public-sector undertakings. The case study of the privatization of the former Japanese National Railways was presented. This is a subject of keen interest to many Member States that are seeking an increase in economic efficiency through the liberalization of economic activities.

The Consultative Committee held a seminar last month on the establishment of a safety zone for refugees in the country of origin, in conjunction with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross. It decided to pursue its studies, taking into account the new circumstances in which we now have more displaced persons in the countries of their nationality than refugees outside their borders.

The Consultative Committee will convene another seminar next month on the international criminal court, a subject that is currently being discussed in the Sixth Committee, which has received the draft statute from the International Law Commission. The States members of the Consultative Committee would like to have a further strengthening and widening of cooperation with the members of the United Nations family.

I now have the honour, under agenda item 20, to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/49/L.4, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee". I am speaking on behalf of the following sponsors: China, Cyprus, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Sri Lanka and Sudan as well as Japan.

The draft resolution is almost the same as resolution A/47/6, adopted in 1992 by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, with the necessary updating. It has three preambular paragraphs and six operative paragraphs.

I would like to draw the attention of representatives to operative paragraph 4. The Consultative Committee now participates actively in the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Accordingly, a reference to that effect is included in this paragraph.

I would like to make one technical amendment to document A/48/L.4. We are to hear today an oral statement by Mr. Tang, Secretary-General of the Consultative Committee. I would therefore like to propose that the date, 25 October 1994, be inserted in the third preambular paragraph, after the fifth word, which is "made". Thus, the third preambular paragraph will now read:

"Having heard the statement made on 25 October 1994 by the Secretary-General of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee on the steps ..."

and so forth.

It is my hope that this draft resolution will receive the Assembly's unanimous approval, as it does not contain any contentious point. The sponsors commend the draft resolution contained in document A/49/L.4, as orally amended, to the General Assembly for adoption without a vote.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of Germany, who will speak on behalf of the European Union and Austria.

Mr. Martens (Germany): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and Austria to express our interest in the activities of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC).

The European Union and Austria welcome the Committee's contribution to, and cooperation with, the United Nations. We equally appreciate the Committee's work in other fields, among which I would like to mention here the law of international trade. The regional arbitration centres in Kuala Lumpur and Cairo contribute to the settlement of disputes in economic and commercial transactions. In this way they are supporting the implementation of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) arbitration rules. We are pleased to note that AALCC intends to establish another of these extremely useful centres in Nairobi.

Both the report of the United Nations Secretary-General and the statement of the Secretary-General of the Committee, Mr. Tang Chengyuan, show a considerable range of topical activities that are relevant to the work of the United Nations. Of particular interest to the Assembly is the work connected with items on the agenda of the Sixth Committee, such as the United Nations Decade of International Law. We are pleased to note the many activities that the AALCC has already undertaken in this regard. The international conference held at Doha in March of this year to promote the objectives of the Decade is only one example. The European Union and Austria would like to encourage the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee to further enrich the Decade with its contributions.

Many other aspects of the Committee's work, such as that connected with refugees, are also directly relevant to the work of the United Nations and its agencies. We are looking forward to studying the Modular Legislation on the Rights and Duties of the

Refugees that the AALCC is currently drafting. The European Union and Austria welcome the close cooperation that exists between the United Nations and the Committee, demonstrated by the extent of participation of relevant United Nations bodies in the annual session and the conferences of the Committee.

Since we last considered this item in the General Assembly, the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee has held two very successful sessions, in Kampala in 1993 and in Tokyo in 1994. We are grateful to the Committee, as well as to the Governments of Uganda and Japan, for the hospitality afforded to observers, including those from States members of the European Union, which benefited greatly by their attendance.

Mr. Suwardi (Indonesia): At the outset, my delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/49/262, of 18 July 1994, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee".

It should be recalled that the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) was founded nearly four decades ago, as the Asian Legal Consultative Committee, by seven Asian States — namely, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan and the Syrian Arab Republic — to serve as an advisory body of legal experts for consultation and cooperation between its member States in the field of international law and economic relations and, more particularly, in matters which are under the consideration of the United Nations and its various organs and agencies.

The AALCC is a unique regional organization, having countries of two large and populous continents of the world as its members. It assists member States through the consideration of international legal questions affecting the interests of developing countries and in the work of codification and development of international law. The AALCC maintains official relations with the United Nations and its bodies, including the International Law Commission, the United Nations Commission on Trade and Development, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law.

The AALCC undertakes three types of work which are supportive of the efforts of the United Nations: keeping under review in its work programme items which are on the agenda of the United Nations, promoting the ratification

of major conventions and treaties and rendering assistance to developing countries concerning items before the Sixth Committee and other topics in the economic and humanitarian fields.

Following routine consultations between the United Nations and the AALCC, a programme of cooperation was drawn up in areas of current interest in the Organization, with a view to strengthening its role. My delegation would like to comment briefly on some of these activities.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Indonesia has always attached great importance to the subject of the law of the sea. At the request of the Indonesian Government, this item was included in the AALCC's agenda in 1971. Initially the AALCC carried out its work on the subject with a view to assisting developing countries to prepare for the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea. Later its efforts were aimed at encouraging and facilitating compromise solutions, the search for which was the task confronting the Conference. Since then its deliberations have focused on a variety of issues relating to the exclusive economic zone, the breadth of the territorial sea, archipelagos, straits used for international navigation, marine pollution and scientific research.

The AALCC has also undertaken various measures to promote the ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Its contributions in this field will be even more significant when the international community welcomes the Convention's entry into force on 16 November 1994. This will indeed be a historic occasion as the Convention is the only comprehensive legal instrument governing the oceans and their uses.

Although the role of the AALCC lay initially in the field of international law, the Committee broadened its objectives by becoming a forum for cooperation in trade and economic relations. The Secretary-General's report informs us of the many activities that have been undertaken in this field. In this regard, we appreciate the preparation of model bilateral agreements for the promotion and protection of investments in the Asian-African region. In 1991 the AALCC adopted a legal guide on industrial joint ventures with a view to enhancing regional industrial cooperation between Member States.

In the field of economic and commercial transactions, two regional centres were established — one in Kuala Lumpur and one in Cairo. These centres provide facilities for *ad hoc* arbitration hearings and for arbitration hearings held under the auspices of other recognized institutions. They also provide assistance in the enforcement of awards and in the development of national arbitration institutions in third-world nations, as well as enhancing cooperation between such institutions.

The global refugee problem has worsened in recent years, and a solution remains elusive. It is therefore gratifying to note that the AALCC and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees are working closely together in studying the situation. A workshop with the remit "International Refugee and Humanitarian Law in the Asian-African Region" was convened by the two Organizations to bring to the attention of Member States the relevant instruments concerning refugees and, in particular, to promote wider acceptance of the 1951 Convention and of the 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees.

In addition, we have noted with appreciation the AALCC's programme of work in the field of international control of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, as well as its study concerning the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace and its analysis of international instruments adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which was held at Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. The Committee has also prepared studies on the legal aspects of the proposals made by the Secretary-General in his report "An Agenda for Peace" — in particular, those concerning mine clearance and the protection of personnel engaged in peacemaking, peace-keeping and other humanitarian activities.

The Indonesian delegation is firmly of the view that the significant progress so far achieved in the work of the AALCC has not only proved beneficial to the countries in the Asian-African region but also had a considerable impact in promoting the interests of the international community as a whole. As a founding member of the Committee, Indonesia reaffirms its support for continued close cooperation between the AALCC and the United Nations, and we are pleased to be one of the sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/49/L.4.

Mr. Kalpagé (Sri Lanka): Sri Lanka's association with the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) dates back to its formative years in the mid-1950s. Sri Lanka was privileged to host the

Committee's third session, which was held in 1960 — 34 years ago. Thereafter, two annual sessions of the Committee — those of 1971 and 1981 — were convened in Colombo.

When Sri Lanka first hosted the AALCC, the Committee comprised a handful of Asian-African nations that were just emerging from long periods of colonial rule. At that time it served as an invaluable mechanism for the creation of a greater consciousness of international legal issues among these newly independent States of Asia and Africa on whose political and economic development the issues of the time had a direct bearing.

Indeed, the AALCC became the logical intergovernmental body for the nations of Asia and Africa to voice their concerns, their needs and their aspirations. It also helped to refashion and to progressively develop the existing norms and principles, which had emerged in the distant past when the countries of Asia and Africa had no opportunity of making any contribution to the formulation of such norms and principles.

Today the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee has a membership of more than 40 countries from the continents of Asia and Africa. Over the years it has developed as an invaluable forum for these countries to discuss contemporary issues of international law and to provide an Asian-African dimension in the progressive development and codification of such laws.

The Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee made its greatest impact through the leading role that it played in the development of contemporary international law of the sea. In fact, new concepts that developed during the negotiations at the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea — such as the concept of the exclusive economic zone — first emerged within the forum of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, before further discussion, development, and finally, adoption at the Conference on the Law of the Sea.

Today, as we stand on the threshold of the entry into force of the historic Convention on the Law of the Sea, which emerged from the complex negotiating process to which the AALCC made an invaluable contribution, it should be reiterated that the Committee has a continuing and crucial role to play in this field. The task of the Committee is to ensure the full realization of the fundamental principle on which the Convention was

carefully built - the principle of the common heritage of mankind - in the new phase of the legal regime of the oceans.

Further, the AALCC has cooperated with other ongoing initiatives of the United Nations - in particular, the issues under discussion in the International Law Commission. In recent years it has devoted its attention to questions relating to the development of new principles in the context of international law of refugees. The work being undertaken on the preparation of model legislation on the status and treatment of refugees and the examination of the novel concept on the establishment of safety zones for displaced persons in their country of origin will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the emerging law in these areas.

The Committee was closely associated with the work of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and in particular on the formulation of the Convention on biodiversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Committee has been engaged in other issues pertaining to the work of the United Nations, such as the United Nations Decade of International Law, the promotion of wider use of the International Court of Justice and the legal aspects of international economic cooperation and development. Legal issues relating to questions of privatization in Asian-African countries are currently on the Committee's agenda. All this demonstrates both the comprehensive range of activities of the Committee and its contributions to contemporary issues of great relevance to the States Members of the United Nations.

Continuing cooperation between the United Nations and the AALCC is imperative if the Committee is to continue to carry out this invaluable task. As a founding member, Sri Lanka welcomes all efforts to strengthen further the cooperation that exists between the United Nations and the Committee. We are therefore pleased to co-sponsor draft resolution A/49/L.4, and we commend its adoption by consensus.

Mr. Karem (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) was established as a regional intergovernmental organization in accordance with the resolutions of the Conference of Bandung in Indonesia in the 1950s. Egypt was one of the principal organizers of the Conference, in cooperation with the two other founding countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, India and Yugoslavia. This, from

the very outset, gave the Committee a close association with Egypt that was reflected in its legal, political and diplomatic role over the past four decades. It is now an established practice that the Deputy Secretary General of the Committee should be an Egyptian national, that he should reside and work in India on a permanent basis and that he should participate in the Committee's work which has led, *inter alia*, to the setting up of the Cairo Regional Centre for International Commercial Arbitration. This Centre makes an effective contribution to heightening awareness in the countries of Africa and Asia of the provisions and rules of international law and of compliance with those rules as well as awareness of the importance of developing and modernizing the norms of international law.

Given these historical and substantive considerations which have created a link between Egypt and the Committee since its inception, and in view of the continued and fruitful cooperation between Egypt and the Committee, the delegation of Egypt wishes to reaffirm that Egypt, which extends every possible support to the Committee, calls for ensuring the continued and effective performance of the Committee's role and hopes that it will receive all the support and cooperation it needs in order for it to discharge its lofty task.

Proceeding from this commitment, Egypt, along with Pakistan, Sri Lanka, China, Qatar, Kenya, India and Japan, which are all members of the AALCC, has presented a draft resolution, which, adopted, will entail the inclusion of a new item in the Assembly's provisional agenda for the fifty-first session, under the title of "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee". We believe that the adoption of such a resolution will strengthen efforts and further cooperation between the United Nations and the regional sub-regional organizations, in consonance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Mr. Kalita (India): The Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) is an intergovernmental organization composed of countries from Asia and Africa. The Committee was constituted in 1956 as an outcome of the Bandung Conference of 1955. India was one of the seven original members and played an important role in setting up the organization. Originally conceived of as an organization of Asian States, it was enlarged to include African States on the suggestion of then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in

his inaugural address to the Committee, whose membership is now 45.

India has the privilege of being not only a founder member, but also the host of the Committee since its very inception.

My delegation would like to place on record its appreciation of the contribution of the former Secretary-General of the Committee, Mr. Frank Njenga of Kenya. We also welcome the new Secretary-General, Mr. Tang Chengyuan of China. We have no doubt that under his able leadership the Committee will continue its very useful work in the field of progressive development and codification of international law.

The report (A/49/262), of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and the Committee contains an overview of the Committee's very useful activities.

The Committee's functions as envisaged in its Statute are primarily directed towards cooperation between its member States in the field of progressive development and codification of international law, particularly matters under consideration by the International Law Commission and other United Nations agencies in the legal field, and consideration of legal problems referred to it by member Governments. Thus the Committee acts as a forum to project the views of Asian and African States in the evolution of new international legal regimes to suit the needs of the developing countries and the changed character of international society. In this connection, I should like to recall that the recently concluded ministerial meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement noted that codification of international law had proceeded in recent years at a rapid pace and that there was need to take comprehensive stock of the ongoing codification and changes in international law in different spheres. The Ministers called upon the United Nations Secretariat to assist in this important exercise. My delegation would like to suggest that cooperation between the United Nations and the AALCC should cover, as a matter of priority, the request made by the Non-Aligned Movement to the United Nations Secretariat.

Pursuant to its programme of rendering assistance to its members to enable them to participate effectively in the work of the General Assembly, the Committee has since 1982 prepared notes and comments on selected items before the General Assembly including those before the Sixth Committee. This year also the Committee has

prepared notes and comments for use by members on selected items. The notes cover the report of the International Law Commission on the work of its forty-sixth session, work done by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) at its twenty-seventh session, the United Nations Decade of International Law, the Law of the Sea and so on. This aspect of the Committee's work should, in our view, be further strengthened.

The Committee's work on international economic cooperation for development is an area of special interest. It is a matter of satisfaction that, under an AALCC scheme for the settlement of disputes in economic and commercial transactions, two regional arbitration centres have been established at Kuala Lumpur and Cairo. One of the objectives of these centres is to help in the promotion and implementation of the UNCITRAL arbitration rules. Steps are being taken to establish and make operational a similar centre in Nairobi for serving the countries in eastern and southern Africa.

Developments in international law are of particular interest to developing countries. In this context, the AALCC plays a useful role in promoting the understanding of these developments by developing countries. We look forward to its strengthening its efforts in this regard.

Before concluding, may I recall that India is a sponsor of draft resolution A/49/L.4, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee". It is our expectation that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. K. J. Khan (Pakistan): At the outset my delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/49/262) of 18 July on cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee.

We are pleased to note that since the admission of the Committee as an Observer in the General Assembly, in October 1980, it has steadily strengthened its supportive role in the work of the United Nations in wide-ranging areas.

We note with satisfaction the continuing efforts of the Committee to strengthen the role of the United Nations and its various organs, including the International Court of Justice, through programmes and initiatives undertaken by the Committee. Pursuant to the framework

of cooperation agreed upon by the two organizations, consultations have regularly taken place on matters of common interest to the two organizations. We are pleased to note that as a result the areas of cooperation between the two organizations have significantly widened and now cover matters in economic and humanitarian fields as well as in the fields of international law.

We attach importance to the active participation of the Committee in the regular sessions of the General Assembly, the International Law Commission, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and previously in the meetings of the Preparatory Commission for the International Sea-bed Authority.

We recognize the useful role being played by the Committee in implementing the objectives of the United Nations Decade for International Law for the period 1990-1999. We also commend the contributions of the Committee in promoting wider recourse to the International Court of Justice. In this context, important progress was made at the meeting of the legal advisers of the member States of the Committee in November 1991 at United Nations Headquarters in New York, to consider, *inter alia*, the peaceful settlement of disputes, including resort to and full respect for the International Court of Justice.

We note with interest the model bilateral agreements for promotion and protection of investment prepared by the Committee with the aim of generating a wider flow of capital and technology to the developing countries in the Asian-African region. We also note with appreciation the current efforts of the Committee to update the legal framework for promoting industrial joint ventures in that region. We welcome the intention of the Committee to prepare a legal guide on joint ventures similar to the one prepared by UNCITRAL on drawing up international contracts for industrial works.

The establishment of two regional arbitration centres at Kuala Lumpur and Cairo by the Committee for the settlement of disputes in economic and commercial transactions is also a welcome step. We hope that the third centre will soon be established in Nairobi.

My delegation recognizes the commendable progress achieved towards enhancing cooperation between the United Nations and the Committee in wider areas in recent years. We also appreciate the continuing efforts of the Committee to strengthen the role of the United Nations and

its various organs through programmes and initiatives undertaken by the Consultative Committee. My delegation therefore fully supports draft resolution A/49/L.4, which we have co-sponsored.

Mr. Li Zhaoxing (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): First I should like to extend my thanks to Ambassador Chusei Yamada for his introduction of the draft resolution on the item "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee". I also look forward to hearing the statement of the Secretary-General of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC), Mr. Tang Chengyuan, on this item. We note with satisfaction the further strengthening and widening of the scope of cooperation between the two organizations in the past two years.

In the 38 years since its inception the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) has increased its influence in the international arena. It provides a forum for Asian and African countries to consult and discuss legal issues and other matters. It has also made important contributions to promoting the progressive development and codification of international law to better serve world peace and development. Since 1980, when the General Assembly invited AALCC to participate in its work and meetings as an Observer, the cooperation between the two organizations has grown closer. Each year a representative of the Secretary-General attends the annual session of AALCC and its representatives also attend meetings of bodies in the United Nations system, including the General Assembly, the International Law Commission and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law. AALCC has also adjusted its work programme to give high priority to matters of immediate concern to the United Nations. Special mention must be made of the fact that in the development and codification of international law AALCC attaches great importance to its cooperation with the International Law Commission. Each year AALCC invites the Chairman of the Commission to attend its annual session to speak about the Commission's work. AALCC has also made the Commission's report on its work a fixed item on the AALCC's annual agenda. Each of the special topics of the International Law Commission is actively discussed at AALCC meetings and proposals are made. At the Commission's annual session, the Secretary-General of AALCC also speaks about its work. The cooperation between the two bodies has been satisfactory and fruitful.

To support the decision contained in General Assembly resolution 44/23, declaring 1990-1999 as the United Nations Decade of International Law, the secretariat of AALCC drew up a paper listing relevant items and possible activities for the Decade. AALCC, in cooperation with the Government of Qatar, held a meeting on international law in Doha in March 1994 to promote the objectives of the United Nations Decade of International Law. To promote acceptance of and respect for the principles of international law, AALCC has urged its members to accede to or ratify as soon as possible the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It has also compiled a note on the implications and the costs of ratifying the Convention.

AALCC continues to follow closely the implementation of the international instruments adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, especially Agenda 21. It has attended many international meetings in the field of environment and development convened by the United Nations, especially the meetings of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa. AALCC has conducted an in-depth study of the draft convention, which provides helpful assistance to its members that are taking part in the negotiations.

In conclusion, we note with satisfaction the further strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and AALCC. We hope the effective cooperation between them in the progressive development and codification of international law as well as other fields of mutual concern will be further strengthened and thereby make a positive contribution to the friendly cooperation between States, the maintenance of international peace and security and the common prosperity of human society, as well as to the establishment of a fair and just new international order based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence and the spirit of the Bandung Conference.

The President (*interpretation from French*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/2 of 13 October 1980, I now call on the Secretary-General of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee.

Mr. Tang Chengyuan (Asian-African Consultative Committee): I am greatly honoured to be making my first appearance in the General Assembly as the new Secretary-General of the Asian-African Legal Consultative

Committee. On behalf of the AALCC and on my own behalf I wish to convey to Mr. Amara Essy our warmest congratulations on his unanimous election to the presidency of the current session of the General Assembly. I share the opinion of everyone present here that he is conducting the proceedings admirably and that under his stewardship the session will come to a successful conclusion.

I am grateful to the Assembly for giving me this opportunity to share some of my thoughts about the close and continuing state of cooperation between the United Nations and AALCC. Although this cooperation was formally initiated in 1980, it is my opinion that the origin of the nexus and cooperation between the United Nations and AALCC can be traced back to 1956, when AALCC was founded to undertake, *inter alia*, the examination of the work of the International Law Commission, from the Afro-Asian perspective on a systematic basis, and to place its recommendations before the Commission.

Following the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 and the initiation of the process of decolonization, more and more countries in Asia and Africa emerged as free nations, and one of their primary concerns was to examine for themselves the existing rules of international law. The bondage to which they had been shackled by unequal treaties had left some sort of resentment against international law. Their adherence to the Charter of the United Nations included the solemn pledge to observe the rules of international law, and they were naturally anxious to ensure that they were not going to be bound by something that would be to their disadvantage. The establishment of the International Law Commission by the United Nations in 1947 for the codification and progressive development of international law was clear recognition that the existing norms of the law of nations needed to be reoriented to meet the changing needs of an expanding international community. Here was a chance for the Asian and African nations to make their voices heard in the shaping of international law. Since, by the very nature of things, progress in the Commission had to be slow, the Asian-African countries were bound to resort to other avenues for expressing their views on questions of international law.

The first major step taken by the Afro-Asian community towards evolving rules of conduct for relations between nations was the Bandung Conference, held in April 1955 and attended by the Heads of State or Government of the then independent or near-independent States of the Afro-Asian region. The Conference was

instrumental in forging an identity for a group of nations with different political, economic and social structures and systems of government, and the 10 principles adopted at that Conference have become important norms for present-day international relations. Some of these principles were undoubtedly already enshrined in the United Nations Charter, but the very fact that the Heads of State or Government of the countries of the Afro-Asian region, sitting together, had adopted them emphasized the aspirations of the new nations to live in harmony on the basis of the rule of law. The Conference provided an impetus to the idea of regional cooperation and stressed the need for concerted action on matters of common interest fundamental to the growth of an international society.

It was against this background that this Committee was established in November 1956 as a tangible outcome of the Bandung Conference and entrusted with a threefold mandate: first, the systematic examination of the work of the International Law Commission (ILC) from the Afro-Asian perspective; second, the consideration of specific legal questions referred to it by its member Governments; and, third, providing of a forum for the exchange of views and information on legal matters of common concern. At its inception it had seven member States, but its membership has now reached 44, and many more States are expected to come into the fold of the AALCC in the post-Cold War period. With the increase in membership, its mandate has been periodically broadened.

The review of the work of the ILC and the making of recommendations to its member Governments, as well to the ILC, have been a continuous exercise for the AALCC since its inception; its recommendations have always been treated with respect by the ILC and reflected in the latter's work. Over the years, it has become customary for the ILC to request that its Chairman attend the AALCC's annual sessions and for the Committee in turn to be represented at the ILC's sessions by either its President or its Secretary-General.

Another of the AALCC's activities that complements the work of the United Nations in the legislative field is the assistance rendered to the delegations of the member States of the AALCC attending diplomatic conferences convened by the United Nations — assistance that is essential, since these delegations are often in need of expertise and assistance to enable them to play a meaningful role in diplomatic negotiations. Such assistance has been rendered to member Governments in the context of the following diplomatic conferences: the Vienna Conference on Diplomatic Relations, 1961; the Vienna Conference on

Consular Relations, 1963; the Vienna Conference on the Law of Treaties, 1968-1969; the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, 1974-1982; the Diplomatic Conference on State Succession in respect of Matters other than Treaties, 1978; the Diplomatic Conference on the Law of Treaties between States and International Organizations and between International Organizations, 1986; the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992; and the World Conference on Human Rights, 1993.

A major initiative taken by the AALCC in the context of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (1974-82) consisted in the Organization's taking upon itself the task of assisting its member States and other Asian-African States in preparing for that Conference. The AALCC's role at this Conference was originally envisaged to be the assisting of Asian-African Governments through preparation of studies and arranging of in-depth discussion; however, the AALCC later emerged as a global forum for dialogue between the industrialized and the developing countries through the participation of observers at its annual sessions and inter-sessional meetings. Some concepts that found a place in the final Convention originated in the deliberations of the AALCC, namely, the exclusive economic zone and archipelagic States. The AALCC is currently engaged in the preparation of model legislation to enable member Governments to implement the provisions of the Convention.

In addition, the AALCC also prepared background and analytical studies for circulation to its member Governments on the subjects of such United Nations Conferences as those on Limitation in International Sale of Goods, 1974; the Code of Conduct on Liner Conferences, 1974; Carriage of Goods by Sea, 1978; Contracts for International Sale of Goods, 1980; International Bills of Exchange and International Promissory Notes, 1988; and the Liability of Transport Terminal Operators in International Trade, 1991. The draft Conventions on International Sales and on Carriage of Goods by Sea had in fact been intensively examined in the AALCC. The latter's recommendations had been placed before the respective Conferences, and some of these recommendations were reflected in the Conventions adopted therein.

The AALCC's activities in the spheres of economic relations and trade law have also complemented the work of the United Nations — in particular, of its subsidiary organs, such as the United Nations Conference on Trade

and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

In 1970, the AALCC established a standing Subcommittee on International Trade Law matters with a mandate to deal with economic and trade law issues and to monitor recent developments in those areas. Official relations were established with UNCTAD in 1968 and since then its legislative activities in the field of trade and development have been under the constant review of our trade law Subcommittee. Official relations established with UNCITRAL in 1971 have resulted in fruitful and effective cooperation between the two organizations in several areas, including the international sale of goods, the carriage of goods by sea, international commercial arbitration, international negotiable instruments and the legal implications of the new international economic order, which was included in UNCITRAL's programme of work pursuant to a recommendation made by the AALCC.

This Assembly, in its resolution 47/171, urged the developing countries and countries in transition to market economies to attach growing importance to the privatization of public sector undertakings as a means to increase economic efficiency, growth and sustainable development in the context of their economic restructuring programmes. In consonance with this recommendation, it was proposed that the AALCC convene a special meeting on privatization at which, through interaction between invited experts, legal advisers and other officials of our member States handling privatization programmes in their respective countries, legal and institutional guidelines for privatization and post-privatization regulatory framework could be developed to provide an added impetus to the process of privatization in Africa and Asia.

Accordingly, a special meeting on privatization was convened by the AALCC in Tokyo from 18 to 20 January 1994 in conjunction with its thirty-third annual session held there. The World Bank deputed the services of two of its senior counsels to serve the special meeting as resource persons. The special meeting was able to produce a text of the legal and institutional guidelines for privatization programmes, which it has submitted to the member Governments for their consideration and possible application. With the financial assistance of the World Bank, we have also been able to print the outcome and proceedings of this special meeting for wider circulation in the African-Asian region.

Let me now briefly refer to our activities since the institutional cooperation between the two bodies was put on

a formal footing in 1980. Since then, the AALCC has oriented its work programme so as to give focused attention to the ongoing efforts of the United Nations in several areas. These have included "An Agenda for Peace", the United Nations Decade of International Law, environment and sustainable development, international protection of refugees and the World Conference on Human Rights.

The proposals made by the United Nations Secretary-General in his report "An Agenda for Peace", aimed at strengthening the role and authority of the United Nations in the post-cold-war era, are under discussion in the AALCC. The Secretary-General's proposals envisage an enhanced role for the United Nations in preventive diplomacy, peace-keeping, peacemaking and peace-building. Peacemaking, which includes preventive diplomacy, is intended to avert or halt conflicts; peacekeeping is intended to preserve the peace once it has been attained; post-conflict peace-building is intended to keep the conflict from breaking out again.

Although each of these stages is different, they are closely interrelated. Although the Secretary-General's initiative is highly laudable, it has to be emphasized that any intrusive action on the part of the United Nations ought to be limited to responding to breaches of international peace or security. Such action should not be extended to the maintenance of internal peace and law and order, which is recognized as the legitimate responsibility of the Member States. At the same time, it needs to be ensured that the United Nations peace agenda should not be at the expense of its development agenda.

As regards the observance of the United Nations Decade of International Law, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the AALCC is working actively towards the realization of the objectives set for this Decade. In this context, it is worth mentioning that we actively cooperated with the Government of the State of Qatar in organizing a conference on international legal issues arising under the United Nations Decade of International Law in Doha from 22 to 25 March 1994. The conference, which was widely attended, deliberated on such subjects as the protection of the environment, the Decade of International Law, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the new international economic order and humanitarian law. We are also discussing the various modalities through which we could make our humble contribution to the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations next year.

In the field of environment and development, I might mention that the AALCC actively participated in the preparatory and final phases of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which culminated in the adoption of Agenda 21 and of the International Conventions on Climate Change and on Biological Diversity. Since the conclusion of the Rio Conference, the AALCC has been focusing on the evaluation of implementing Agenda 21 and on assisting the member Governments to implement the provisions of these two Conventions at the national level. In addition, the AALCC also actively participated and provided input to the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, which has resulted in an International Convention to Combat Desertification.

As for the promotion of human rights, the AALCC monitored the preparatory process of the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, and was represented at that Conference. While we wholeheartedly subscribe to the promotion of human rights by the United Nations, we must clearly indicate that intrusive action by the United Nations for this purpose is not acceptable and that persuasion, rather than coercion, should be the watchword.

In the area of international refugee law, we have been actively cooperating with both the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Organization of African Unity for its development. At present, work is focused on two areas: first, the possible establishment of safety zones for persons displaced internally due to armed hostilities in their country of origin; and, secondly, the formulation of model legislation on refugee protection. The focus of deliberations on the former is on the evolution of acceptable operational criteria, so that such zones could provide internationally supervised protected areas in armed conflicts and thus alleviate the suffering of displaced persons. The proposed model legislation is intended to offer guidelines to the Member States for enacting a suitable legal regime in their respective territories to guarantee a legal status and treatment for refugees.

Let me take this opportunity to inform the Assembly that the thirty-fourth annual session of the AALCC is to be held in Doha, Qatar, in March 1995.

The President (*interpretation from French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/49/L.4. In this context, I should like to announce that Uganda has joined the list of sponsors.

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/49/L.4?

Draft resolution A/49/L.4 was adopted (resolution 49/8).

The President (*interpretation from French*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 20?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 89 (*continued*)

Environment and sustainable development

- (d) Elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/477)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the reports of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (A/49/84, Add.1 and Add.2)

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): It gives me much pleasure to participate in this very important debate on desertification. May I express at the outset my delegation's satisfaction at the speedy and efficient conclusion in Paris last June of the negotiation process of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, which paved the way for the signing of the Convention last week.

We would like to record our very sincere appreciation for the hard work, commitment and dedication of the entire Committee, which was very ably chaired by Ambassador Bo Kjellén. Our congratulations

also go to Ambassador Hama Arba Diallo, Executive Secretary of the Committee, for their pioneering work, as well as to all members of the delegations that participated in the process.

The signing ceremony for the desertification Convention in Paris on 14 and 15 October demonstrated the importance member countries attach to it. Its signing by 87 Member States and organizations gives us hope that the process of ratification will also be smooth and efficient, so as to allow for the Convention to enter into force without delay.

During the Preparatory Conference of the Rio Summit, the international community, moved to action by the growing scale of desertification and drought and its impact on the countries affected, agreed to treat the problem as a global phenomenon calling for universal mobilization. It was on that basis that General Assembly resolution 44/228 and Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 placed desertification among the nine questions of the greatest importance for the preservation of the quality of the Earth's environment for ecologically sound and sustainable development.

My delegation believes that the international community has the ability to prevent the catastrophe of desertification and drought. All that is needed is to mobilize human, technical and financial resources to this end. Two years ago, the United Nations Secretary-General appealed to the international community to avert the consequences of the severe drought that confronted the countries of eastern and southern Africa. As members remember, the prolonged absence of rainfall threatened the social and economic fabric in those areas. The rapid response of the international community helped to prevent large-scale human catastrophe. But we remain mindful of the ecological and economic damage inflicted by that drought, and we appeal to the international community to join forces in combating the phenomenon on a sustained basis.

The fight against desertification is a fight for survival. It must be an integral part of the socio-economic development programme aimed at satisfying people's immediate and long-term needs. The strategic objective of combating desertification and drought, which is limited to the sustainable development of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones, must confront the real challenges of using preventive measures to check or prevent the desertification of land that is only slightly or not yet degraded. It should also regenerate, through corrective

measures, the productivity of moderately degraded land, as well as restore the productivity of seriously degraded land, using rehabilitation and repair measures.

Against that background, it becomes imperative that additional resources be sought. It is not by coincidence that the most affected countries happen to be also the least developed countries.

The international community should take measures to reduce the excessive burden of debt on developing countries and to check deteriorating rates of exchange and improve international economic relations so as to increase and maintain the quality of life. Particular attention should be directed towards increasing financial and technical assistance to help poor developing countries implement their strategies for development of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones in rural areas threatened or affected by desertification on a sustained basis.

The international community, together with international, regional and subregional organizations, and in particular the Committee on Science and Technology, should mobilize the existing network of institutions, agencies and other bodies in order to organize effectively the gathering, analysis and distribution of data in the observation and forecasting of drought and desertification phenomena and in perfecting techniques to combat desertification and drought.

The journey on the road from the Rio "Earth Summit" has many significant milestones, and one of them is the desertification Convention. But the search for a new global consensus on international cooperation for development links together all economic, social and environmental conferences, including the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Conference on Human Rights, the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). All these conferences converge in an international policy dialogue that seeks to define a more integrated and holistic strategy for human development and welfare.

Poverty alleviation, education and health, gender equality, the empowerment of local groups, better standards of life, and care for our natural resources are common themes that run through all those conferences. Those themes are rooted in a set of principles and values enshrined in the United Nations Charter and other

international instruments. By building on these human values and the efforts of many institutions, the international community can resolve to make the world a better place for all and for future generations.

It is my delegation's belief that now that the process of negotiations for the Convention relating to desertification has come to a successful conclusion and the signing process is in progress, the Convention should have the same status, receive equal interest and be given the same attention and priority as the international conventions signed at Rio.

One of the significant decisions reached by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee was the need for urgent action on Africa. While it is acknowledged that desertification is a worldwide phenomenon, its impact on the continent of Africa is profound and is spreading at an alarming rate. We urge our developed partners and international and multilateral institutions to provide support in areas such as capacity-building and the mobilization of necessary resources for the implementation of the resolution on urgent action for Africa.

Let me conclude my statement by expressing our hope that the signing of this Convention will provide an avenue for our country to become a useful partner in the global economic system and in devising efficient means to address our priorities in combating desertification, drought and poverty.

Mr. Idris (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The delegation of Sudan reiterates the great importance it attaches to the recommendations and decisions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, particularly those contained in Agenda 21, and of the conferences and conventions that emanated from the Rio Conference, such as the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa and the Convention on Biological Diversity. When we add to these conferences the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the restructuring of the Global Environment Facility, we find that we have a number of landmarks toward the continued implementation of Agenda 21 and the other Rio recommendations.

The considerable political commitment demonstrated at the Rio summit, with all States emphasizing the need to protect the environment and to adopt long-term development policies, in the interest of present and future generations, in consonance with the shared responsibility of developing and developed countries, was an achievement that continues to be the focus of the attention by the international community, especially by the developing countries. Despite the developing world's concern at the failure to implement what was agreed upon at Rio, there have been some positive developments that give reason for optimism, such as the signing of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, the adoption last May of the Barbados Programme of Action on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the restructuring of the Global Environment Facility, which involved the earmarking of \$2 billion for the implementation of Agenda 21.

Yet, despite those encouraging developments, there has not been any progress on a number of important issues, such as the transfer of environmentally sound technology and the creation of permanent sources of financing for the implementation of the Rio agreements. In that context, my delegation wishes to congratulate the Commission on Sustainable Development, which has set up working groups for that purpose, and which keeps alive the spirit of partnership and shared responsibility that led to the adoption of Agenda 21.

Among the most significant results of the Rio Conference is chapter XII of Agenda 21, on combatting drought and desertification and on the elaboration of a convention to combat drought and desertification, especially in Africa. My delegation participated in all phases of the work towards such a convention as a member of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, through the signature of the Convention last week in Paris. Sudan was among the first States to sign this important Convention, on which we pin great hopes for a lasting solution to the problem of drought and desertification, the major impediment to development.

Given the importance of the environment, my country has established the Supreme Council for Development and Natural Resources to follow up the implementation of the recommendations and resolutions

of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In this connection, a number of symposia, programmes and seminars have been held, the latest of which was the workshop convened on 30 and 31 August 1994. Sudan also introduced a programme to enhance grass-roots awareness of afforestation to halt the onslaught of the desert. At present Khartoum and other provinces are carrying out broad afforestation campaigns with the participation of all members of society, the young, the elderly, men and women alike. Combating desertification is one of three important issues that have been given special attention by my country. The other two are food security and environmental protection.

At the regional level, Sudan is preparing a five-year programme of action with the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD). Recently, Sudan hosted a workshop attended by States members of IGADD, the States of the Horn of Africa, Djibouti, Eritrea, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Sudan. The workshop was held from 28 to 30 September 1994, with the purpose of arriving at a joint position and developing an integrated programme of action for the implementation of the International Convention to Combat Drought and Desertification.

While we welcome the International Convention to Combat Drought and Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, we must say that the Convention will remain dead letter if adequate financing is not provided. In this connection, my delegation calls for the strengthening of national capabilities in the area of combating desertification and the strengthening of regional and subregional organizations that are active in the field.

Mr. Lacson (Philippines): The Philippines is greatly pleased to participate in this meeting of the General Assembly to consider the twin problems of drought and desertification. That we are meeting in plenary session attests to the significance of those problems, as affirmed by the Rio Summit, and recognizes the courage and determination of the international community in waging war against those scourges of nature of global dimensions, both geological and human, that affect all regions of the world, particularly Africa.

Before I continue I should like, on behalf of my Government, to pay a tribute to Ambassador Bo Kjellén of Sweden, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, for his diplomatic skill, his prudence and his patience in guiding the arduous and complex work of the Committee. Well-deserved congratulations also go to the

members of the Board of the Committee and its Executive Secretary, Mr. Hama Arba Diallo. The fact that close to 90 countries signed the International Convention in Paris 10 days ago confirms the acceptability of the Committee's product.

The Philippines participated actively in the formulation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 47/188 of 22 December 1992, which established an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, and in the subsequent negotiations for the elaboration and adoption of the International Convention.

We were pleased that the international community, after addressing the important issues of climate change and biological diversity, flexed its mental muscles to address another critical issue in the global quest for sustainable development, namely the problem of land degradation and its effects caused by desertification and drought.

Desertification, which already affects one sixth of the world's population and one fourth of the total land area of the earth, continues to claim vast areas as it creeps ominously across vulnerable land-degraded territories. Instances of extended drought have contributed to the degradation of once-productive range land and crop land and have led to widespread unemployment and underemployment, to poverty, famine and death. Agenda 21 notes that drought, a recurring phenomenon throughout much of the developing world, especially in Africa, claimed - in that continent alone - the lives of some 3 million people in the mid-1980s. Who among us has not been moved by the stark images of people fleeing from drought-stricken areas, of children dying from starvation? Aware of these facts and considerations, the Philippines and other countries afflicted by serious drought problems welcomed the proposed objectives and concerns of the International Convention.

Drought and desertification are problems with complex, interlinked causes and effects - physical, political and social. Subregional, regional and international collaboration is critical to arrest their causes and to rectify their effects. We felt that efforts not only to mitigate the effects of drought but also to seek means to prevent it would help in the international action to arrest desertification.

Such concerted action, marshalling the accumulated research and scientific knowledge, the intimate experience, the technologies and the financial resources of all nations, would be assured by the International Convention.

Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 stresses that, in combating desertification, priority should be given to the implementation of preventive measures for vulnerable and potentially vulnerable lands, without, of course, neglecting the already severely degraded areas.

As its carefully chosen title indicates, the International Convention's objective is to combat desertification in countries that are experiencing not only actual desertification but also serious drought problems. Geographical history shows us how serious and extended periods of drought lead to hydrological imbalances adversely affecting land-production resource systems and shows us that such land degradation can contribute inexorably to the process of desertification.

Indeed, in defining the phrase "mitigating the effects of drought", the International Convention refers to activities related to the prediction of drought and to the reduction of the vulnerability of society and natural systems to drought as it relates to combating desertification. Preventive action, which is key to the strategy of the International Convention, is in line with the precautionary principles which we have accepted in our many discussions on environment and sustainable development in the past few years.

We believe that an ounce of prevention is more effective than a pound of cure. Prevention of the causes of desertification, including drought, could cost much less than reclaiming deserts and rehabilitating already degraded land.

The Philippines continues to hold that drought-stricken areas in humid tropical regions, such as South-East Asia, should have been included in the Convention's definition of affected areas and that countries with such areas should have been considered affected countries. We are convinced that even by itself drought is a problem of such magnitude in the developing world that it requires urgent international cooperative attention.

We are also convinced that prevention of drought helps prevent severe land degradation and could help prevent desertification. We stressed this concept and put it on record at the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee meeting in Paris last June. We intend to pursue it at the

first Conference of the Parties, in the hope that the affected developing country parties considered eligible for assistance in the implementation of the Convention — as indicated in paragraph 3 of Article 4, "General obligations" — can include, *de facto*, other countries experiencing severe drought problems. Such countries, let me repeat, are very vulnerable to serious land degradation and desertification.

Despite our feeling in Paris last June that drought-affected countries in humid tropical regions were excluded from the mainstream of the Convention, we were assured by the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, by its Bureau, by the secretariat and by other delegations that our problems were part of the Convention's concerns. We hoped, as we do now, and contrary to our interpretation of key provisions, that the letter of the Convention did not fall short of the spirit which moved us to join the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee's deliberations. It was with this hope that we joined the consensus for the adoption of the Convention in Paris.

Indeed, there are many provisions in the Convention — in the statement of objective in article 2, in the statement of principles in article 3, in the general provisions, in the action programmes, scientific and technical cooperation and supporting measures, and in the regional annexes — which feed our hope that drought-affected countries, including those in South-East Asia, "belong" to the Convention.

We know the Convention will usher in a new era of cooperative endeavour to solve very critical problems of advanced and steadily deteriorating land degradation, which continue to cause so much economic and social difficulty, displacement, poverty and personal anguish for millions of people the world over, particularly in Africa.

The Philippine delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General in document A/49/477. We agree with him that in addressing the major environmental problems of desertification and drought the Convention manifests innovativeness by dealing urgently

"not only with what needs to be done but also with how it is to be done." (A/49/477, para. 6)

We agree, in particular, with the Convention's emphasis on, first, a "bottom-up" philosophy encompassing participation at all levels of national communities, including local Governments and non-governmental

organizations; secondly, an integrated approach to the physical, biological, social and economic dimensions, including those related to maintaining and enhancing land productivity in order to alleviate poverty; thirdly, demand-driven redirection of scientific and technological activities according to perceived and evident needs; fourthly, integration of action programmes in national policies for sustainable development and emphasis on subregional and regional collaboration towards global action; and, fifthly, measurement of the progress of implementation through specific criteria and indicators.

Such a continuing review of progress could avoid the relegation of the Convention to the archives of inactive international agreements. We hope the Global Environmental Facility can marshal new and adequate funds for projects to combat drought and desertification and that the financial and technological assistance committed by our developed-country partners will be forthcoming. The provisions of the Convention would mean little without adequate financing and technological support.

We in the Philippines, as evidenced by our active participation in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee deliberations and, we hope, in the Convention's subsequent implementation, with whatever knowledge and experience we can share, wish to manifest our solidarity with other countries, but most particularly with our brotherly countries in Africa.

We look forward to participating actively in the preparations for the first Conference of the Parties and, of course, in the Conference of the Parties itself.

We reiterate our pledge of solidarity and collaboration, within our region and beyond, in the struggle against the economic and social effects of land degradation and in the global efforts to combat desertification and drought. That we make this pledge despite misgivings because the Convention can stand further improvement is, we believe, the essence of international cooperation. We are ready to cooperate.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.



General Assembly

Forty-ninth Session

44th Meeting

Tuesday, 25 October 1994, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Essy (Côte d'Ivoire)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Seniloli (Fiji),
Vice-President, took the Chair.*

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 89 (continued)

Environment and sustainable development

- (d) Elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/477)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the reports of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (A/49/84 and Add.1 and Add.2)

Draft resolution (A/49/L.4)

Mr. Talpur (Pakistan): At Rio de Janeiro, with the adoption of Agenda 21, we launched a historic process which led to the finalization of the convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Drought and/or Desertification. The culmination of this process at the Paris signing ceremony is a recognition, not only of the fact that the international community is fully conscious of the ravages caused by drought and desertification, but also of its commitment to deal with this problem.

This is no longer a problem affecting a few countries which are left to cope with it on their own, but one of global dimensions. The international community, through this Convention, has undertaken the responsibility of dealing with the issue in a collective manner within an operational framework that calls for strengthened partnerships. The Convention is the first international and legally binding instrument deriving from the Rio Conference that links environment and development.

In countries affected by desertification and drought, the twin menace has grave socio-economic consequences. It affects every aspect of human activity. The Convention therefore recognizes that "desertification and drought affect sustainable development through their interrelationships with important social problems such as poverty, poor health and nutrition, lack of food security, and those arising from migration, displacement of persons and demographic dynamics".

The problem of desertification and the effects of drought affect an estimated 900 million people in over 80 countries. Within these countries, those touched are among the poorest and the most marginalized. These problems stunt economic growth and development and have in some cases led to the impoverishment of many a developing country.

Poverty has grave socio-economic implications and is destroying the present world order. Societies have begun to disintegrate as people compete for increasingly

scarce resources. This scarcity of resources, especially of food stocks in the developing countries, has led to internal strife. Every year, one or two countries descend into internal political chaos because they can no longer provide sustenance and hope for their peoples. The spreading chaos can no longer be quarantined behind barbed wire to protect the islands of the privileged. The affluent countries are unable to insulate themselves. Failure to deal with desertification and the effects of drought accelerates the process of impoverishment of the people in dry lands and exacerbates the emergency cycle of famine and drought relief, thereby diverting resources badly needed for addressing long-term issues of development. The adoption of the Convention provides the international community with the tools it needs to deal with the issues of poverty and food scarcity, which are multiplied in countries afflicted with drought and desertification.

I have the honour to inform this Assembly that Pakistan signed the Convention at the Paris ceremony. The economy of Pakistan has an agricultural base and we are increasingly concerned at the rapid loss of good cultivable land to the expanding deserts. The loss of such land has brought immense misery to the small landowners and tillers. Families have been uprooted in the provinces of Sindh, Baluchistan, the North West Frontier and Punjab as land erosion sets in. In search of a livelihood, such farm-based families are forced to migrate to larger cities. To stop such human suffering is of critical importance to the Government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Every inch of agricultural land is precious to us and therefore our commitment to the Convention rises out of our own immediate concerns as do our efforts to work together with the international community to deal with this environmental problem, which directly affects the lives of millions of human beings.

The Convention and its annexes form a legally binding instrument. Signing it is therefore a declaration of intent on the part of all signatories that the obligations identified in the document are binding upon them.

The adoption of the Convention also reflects a tacit agreement that the African countries afflicted by these two problems require immediate attention. We stand by our brethren from Africa and sincerely hope that the implementation of the Convention will assist them in their efforts to alleviate some of their economic problems, which are the direct result of these twin problems.

The actions taken by the developing countries at the national level to implement the Convention not only require

political commitment but also substantial new and additional resources. The increased resources are critical for developing countries to reclaim the land swallowed by deserts. According to estimates, nearly \$22 billion will be required annually over the next 20 years to finance the rehabilitation of land and halt the decline in fertility. Such additional resources would be difficult to generate in the already financially strapped developing countries.

It is quite clear that adequate technology and know-how are critical for land reclamation. Such technology is available in the developed countries that have decades of experience with such problems. It is therefore essential that the developed countries step in with adequate new financial resources. Such resources should be made available to the signatories of the Convention that have reflected their commitment to dealing with this issue through national action but are unable to implement their programmes in this area due to a lack of resources.

In Pakistan we have attempted to undertake some remedial measures through reforestation projects and the construction of tube-wells. Within the context of our national conservation strategy, and linking it with the social action programme vigorously pursued by the present Government, we have launched land-reclamation projects and projects to support displaced and impoverished families. The problem is large and the resources of the Government limited. We look forward to any additional resources that can strengthen our hand in carrying out our efforts to combat the onslaught of desertification and land erosion.

We are convinced that the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office of the United Nations Development Programme can play an extremely important role in assisting the developing countries in the implementation of the Convention. That Office can provide advice to developing countries on acquiring the required expertise. We welcome the decision of the Administrator that following the adoption of the Convention the Office will now deal with the needs of all countries facing the problems of drought and desertification.

The arduous journey of drafting a legal document is over. We are now stepping into its implementation phase. In order to ensure that the Convention does not become just another well-bound document in the archives, political commitment at the highest level is essential. Implementation will require concrete national action with appropriate international support.

Mr. Maruyama (Japan): Last week in Paris, at the ceremony hosted by the Government of France, my Government, together with those of many other States, signed the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa. The Convention is an important achievement, and the number of signatories augurs well for its prompt entry into force.

I should like to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of France for hosting this magnificent ceremony. I also extend my appreciation to Mr. Bo Kjellén, Chairman of the Negotiating Committee, for carrying out his most difficult responsibilities with such consummate skill. I wish also to thank Mr. Arba Diallo, Executive Secretary of the Negotiating Committee, and all the others who worked so hard to complete the Convention. We must now bend our efforts to securing its prompt ratification and ~~to~~ finishing the work necessary to ensure its full implementation. In the light of the momentum we have generated, I am convinced that we can overcome any difficulties that may arise at the next session of the Negotiating Committee early next year, and I assure the Assembly of the full cooperation of my Government towards that end.

As the Convention explicitly states, desertification is interwoven with a variety of economic and social issues, and a comprehensive approach is therefore needed if the problem is to be successfully addressed. The Tokyo Declaration, adopted at the conclusion of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) held in Japan, also emphasizes the importance of taking measures to assist Africa and enhance its self-reliance. My Government sincerely hopes that TICAD follow-up activities will dovetail with efforts to implement the Convention and thereby accelerate progress towards the sustainable development of Africa. For its part, Japan has steadily increased its development assistance to Africa in a wide range of areas. For example, it has worked to increase food supplies and food production, to improve health care and sanitation, to build capacity and to promote human resources development. It has increased the cooperation it has provided to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the African Development Bank and the World Bank, particularly in connection with their efforts to assist sub-Saharan African countries. And it has announced a plan to increase official development assistance for environmental projects to the level of 900 billion to 1 trillion Japanese yen — that is, \$7 billion to \$7.7 billion — over the five-year period from 1992 through 1996, and for projects related to population

and HIV/AIDS to \$3 billion for the period 1993 to 2000, assistance that will go to developing countries in Africa and elsewhere.

One programme of assistance particularly relevant in the context of the Convention is the African Programme for the Supply of Potable Water, which provides grant aid for the development of groundwater and water-supply systems. Approximately \$250 million to \$300 million in such aid has been allocated to it for fiscal years 1993 through 1995. Used in combination with development studies, the grants are aimed at achieving the following three objectives: first, ensuring access to potable water; secondly, developing groundwater systems to improve people's living environments; and, thirdly, relieving women and children of the hard daily labour of drawing and carrying well water. Approximately \$98 million in grant aid was disbursed in fiscal year 1993 to fund 17 projects in 15 African countries.

I should like to make a few comments with respect to the measures that we intend to take in order to assist the implementation of the Convention, particularly in the context of the "prompt start" process.

First, Japan will strengthen the dialogue it conducts with those countries affected by desertification and drought on whether the projects carried out with Japanese official development assistance are actually helping to combat desertification. Secondly, we shall dispatch survey missions to countries severely affected by desertification or drought, particularly in Africa, to further clarify needs in the field. Thirdly, we will be actively involved in developing a coordinating mechanism to assist in the formulation of a programme of action to combat desertification in the most affected countries.

The signing of the Convention is an important achievement, but, as I noted at the outset, we must now move on to realize the goals it envisages. It is my hope that our efforts will meet with success.

Ms. Yang Yanyi (China) (*interpretation from China*): I make this statement on behalf of the Deputy Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China.

In June this year, the international community adopted the Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. This marks the first step of the international community in implementing

Agenda 21 adopted by the Rio Conference. The Convention is also the first global agreement in the field of prevention of desertification. The countries of the world have all attached great importance to the negotiations on this Convention and many Heads of State and cabinet ministers delivered speeches emphasizing the importance of the Convention for the global environment and the welfare of mankind. After more than a year of work, the Convention was finally concluded ahead of schedule. We welcome the conclusion of the Convention.

The problem of desertification has seriously affected all regions of the world and threatened the lands and living resources of one quarter of the world's population.

In particular, land degradation and continued drought in developing countries have had exceptionally grim consequences for the local population. Desertification has accelerated the process of impoverishment which, in turn, has aggravated the problem of desertification. Undoubtedly, this will directly affect the realization of the noble goal of sustainable development.

China is faced with the same problem of desertification and almost half of its population is threatened. The direct economic losses caused by this problem have reached as high as \$500 million each year. The Chinese Government is persevering in its efforts to combat desertification and has devoted enormous human and material resources to that end. We hope that the international community will lend its support to our efforts to check the process of desertification more effectively. The Convention has indeed been concluded at an opportune moment. We support it and hope that it will promote international cooperation in the prevention of desertification and alleviation of drought.

The Chinese Government sent a delegation to Paris headed by a cabinet minister to participate in the signing ceremony and to sign the Convention, and we are currently earnestly making all the necessary preparations for the implementation of the Convention and participation in international cooperation in the related areas.

The Chinese delegation believes that it is in the interest of such cooperation in related areas that the system of international cooperation was initially established by the Convention under the terms of which help will be given by developed countries to developing countries, and especially African countries, in the field of desertification prevention. In the course of negotiations, developed countries expressed positively their intention to join in such

cooperation. For this, we wish to express our appreciation.

However, it should be pointed out that, generally speaking, rights and obligations defined by the Convention are not balanced. This is mainly reflected in the fact that developed countries have failed to undertake substantial commitments as to ways in which they can help developing countries fulfil Convention obligations, especially in terms of financial resources and mechanisms. Some international programmes of action in this field once existed. Shortage of financial resources was a major reason for past unsuccessful efforts to prevent desertification. According to statistics, the average *per capita* fund required for desertification prevention in the areas concerned should be \$12, but the current actual fund for each person is only \$1. This serious shortage of funds casts a dark cloud over the realization of Convention objectives.

The world's land surface is eroding from the effects of desertification and people of desert-ridden developing countries are living in untold misery. We urge the international community, and especially developed countries, to fulfil the commitments they made at the Rio Conference and to try their best to help developing countries by providing them with financial resources and technology. Only in this way can global desertification be genuinely checked in the interest of all mankind. China, as a victim of desertification and a developing country, is willing to work with other members of the international community in a concerted effort to realize the objectives set forth in the Convention.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of the countries involved in the work of the political coordination and consultation machinery known as the Rio Group, that is, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela and my own country, Brazil.

I hope to be able to convey to the Assembly the hopes and fears of this group of countries with regard to the very important issue of the fight against desertification and drought. Its importance has been very properly recognized in this Hall by those who have already spoken. However, I deem it necessary to add a few thoughts with a view to expanding and perhaps enhancing the dialogue on this subject.

I should also like to express the profound appreciation of our countries for the outstanding job done by Ambassador Bo Kjellén, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on the Convention. We are sure that his contribution played a decisive role as the complex negotiations unfolded.

Desertification is one of the four central issues that are being dealt with as priority items in the Commission for Sustainable Development. The other three are forests, biological diversity and land use. Our countries have been supporting the Commission's efforts to promote specific activities likely to attain the goals set with regard to sustainability. Desertification, along with the other sectoral issues, is thus an extremely important issue at the Rio Conference.

The affirmation I have just made on behalf of our countries is based on our deep awareness of the reality of life in our countries where both Governments and peoples throughout society are engaged in a permanent struggle against desertification and drought.

We therefore take the view that the international community as a whole must also devote special attention to the challenge posed by desertification, just as it does in the treaties dealing with the related issues of biological diversity and forests.

To varying degrees drought and desertification have adversely affected 75 per cent of the land surface in Latin America. The degradation of the land in arid, semi-arid and sub-humid areas is the result of a number of factors, including climatic variations and human activity. In many parts of our region desertification is advancing at an astounding rate.

The main effects of the processes of desertification throughout Latin America are less and less fertile soils, a decline in crop yields, sedimentation, erosion and rising levels of salinity, to name just a few. These processes, which are cumulative and increasing, bring on many negative effects in the social, cultural, economic and environmental areas. In social terms, these factors engender poverty and migration away from rural areas, which leads to a deterioration in the quality of life for the people. It is felt that out of 200 million poor people throughout Latin America, some 40 million are poor precisely because of desertification. The situation is in fact worse yet when one recognizes that in our region we have one of the greatest reserves world wide of biological diversity.

I now focus, by way of an example, on the situation prevailing in the north-east of Brazil. In that region, 55 per cent of the land is threatened with desertification. The deterioration process has severely affected 4.3 per cent of the land; an additional 20.3 per cent is at risk; and we are witnessing an advance of desertification, albeit at a moderate pace, in a further 30.6 per cent. The problem in Brazil, therefore, is just as bad as it is elsewhere. More than 18 million people are affected, which translates into serious social pressures.

It should be stressed that this picture stems primarily from the deterioration of the terms of trade and from commercial trade practices that distorted the markets for the products of agriculture, fisheries and forestry. In social terms, we are all aware of the results: impoverishment, migration, domestic displacement and a serious deterioration of the quality of life of the local communities and of the people in general.

The countries of Brazil consider it necessary for major amounts of resources to be allocated to fighting desertification and drought if we are to achieve global and, therefore, lasting results. They consider it important to expand international cooperation so as to secure from the developed countries new and significant financial resources that are predictable, sustained and reliable. The appearance of such support would be proof of a genuine willingness to seek cooperative, world wide, effective and balanced solutions to the problems that confront all of mankind. We recognize also that the problem is of supreme importance as far as the African continent is concerned: of this there is no doubt.

Our countries fully endorse and subscribe to the content of chapter 12, section II, of Agenda 21, particularly as regards the proposals aimed at wiping out poverty, at promoting sustainable agriculture, at establishing systems of information and of monitoring, at developing, as a matter of priority, preventive systems in lands that have not yet suffered deterioration and at encouraging storage and transportation programmes. These elements, taken as a whole, would make an invaluable contribution to mitigating the problems of those who have become refugees because of drought. In this context, special consideration should be given to efforts devoted to educational programmes regarding environmental issues, technical training and, in particular, the support of local communities. All these are important issues in terms of the financing required, which is why international cooperation has to be brought into play decisively.

Just a few days ago the Convention on desertification was opened for signature in Paris. This Convention is part of a new category of international instruments arising from the Rio Conference. It follows a long-drawn-out process of negotiation, concluded only quite recently: over 18 months of negotiation were required in Nairobi, New York and Geneva before the Paris Agreement materialized in June of this year.

Many expectations and hopes were created and many plans were made. Alleviating poverty, lessening the suffering of local peoples the world over, sharing the benefits of development, improving health and the well-being of local peoples — these were the specific goals towards which we strove. We still face a difficult negotiating process, one in which the developed countries often depart from the spirit of the Rio deliberations, particularly with regard to the concept of global association — characterized by responsibility that is shared but also differentiated according to the degree of development attained by States — in order to reach the goals of sustainable development.

The negotiation that led to the Convention on desertification, has led, in practical terms, to efforts to reinterpret the Rio Conference consensus, particularly in terms of international cooperation. The negotiating process has been marked by conditionalities, revealing that the interest of certain developed countries in this convention was minor. Compare the content of related conventions, such as those on climatic change and biological diversity, which entail firmer and fuller commitments regarding the transfer of financial resources and of technology. Thus it is essential that the developed countries take a fresh look at where they stand and that they honour the commitments they assumed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in terms of financial support and the transfer of technology.

A number of Latin American Member States, including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru, have signed the Convention on desertification. This means that we also see many positive features in this instrument. We thus trust that the international community will take advantage of the opportunities opened up by this Convention and will translate into reality the cooperation the developing countries so yearn for. Our countries need to seek cooperative global solutions to the problems of desertification and drought inasmuch as these are problems that we share with all mankind. We therefore believe in concrete examples that can signal new courses of action on

this planet. We share the concept that what we need is a genuine political will on the part of developed countries to contribute to the implementation of initiatives capable of breaking the vicious circle of desertification, of drought and, therefore, of poverty.

The countries of the Rio group, which share these views, hope and expect that implementation of the Convention will take place in spirit of what was agreed upon in Rio de Janeiro.

Mr. Jallow (Gambia): The successful conclusion of the negotiations for the elaboration of the International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, within the time frame set by this august body, and the consensus adoption of a Convention deserve commendation.

The negotiating process, which spanned 19 months, was not easy or smooth. Reaching an understanding, let alone a consensus, on certain provisions of the draft Convention was sometimes almost impossible.

Today, as we review the Convention and its regional annexes, the feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment from 900 million people around the world affected by desertification is even greater. Congratulations are therefore in order and in this connection my delegation would like to congratulate Chairman Bo Kjellén, Ambassador Araba Jallow, the other members of the bureau and all participants who worked tirelessly and frankly to make the adoption of the Convention possible.

The need for an international Convention to combat desertification has always been a crucial factor in Africa's negotiations on environmental issues and related problems. Desertification is a problem affecting all regions of our continent, with a negative impact on our sustainable development.

The Gambia, a Sahelian country, has suffered from severe periods of drought coupled with the threat of engulfment by a creeping Sahara desert. Since the 1980s drought has accounted for the reversal in the country's socio-economic development. Desertification has also aggravated the problems caused by drought. Annually, we lose a large number of livestock, and the migration of people in search of arable land and water is becoming more frequent.

The effects of desertification and drought on land degradation and the disruption of the ecological balance have always been a cause of concern to my Government. The serious efforts of my Government to combat desertification and mitigate drought through the allocation of greater resources and other measures have yielded some fruitful results but have not reversed the situation. It is for these reasons that my delegation welcomes the Convention and the resolution on priority action for Africa in implementation of the Convention.

Recognition of the global dimension of drought and desertification and their disruptive effects on one of the most priceless elements of mankind's heritage, our flora and fauna, followed by the recently adopted Convention to combat desertification and drought, will serve to deepen the international community's involvement and commitment.

Africa remains the region of the world worst hit by drought and desertification — to such an extent that there is an increasing loss of land productivity. The population-growth rate far exceeds the rate of food production; arid and semi-arid lands are being marginalized or wasted; and poverty and the displacement of people are on the increase. It is calculated that the income lost in these ways has risen from \$26 billion in 1978 to \$42.3 billion annually since 1991.

The adoption of the Convention signals the long-awaited concerted international effort and assistance. The Convention, which reflects the interests and concerns of States parties, gives a clear indication of the level and extent of the task involved as well as the type of contributions expected from all parties through international cooperation and partnership arrangements, including those made at the national, subregional and regional levels. The Gambia, in meeting its obligations under the Convention, will continue to review and improve its national action programmes in the hope of synchronizing them with those of other States parties at the subregional, regional and global levels. These programmes will be linked to the country's national sustainable-development policies.

The implementation of these programmes to combat desertification has involved considerable technological and financial resources that are beyond the capability of my country. These constraints, coupled with growing concern at the ever-present twin evils of drought and desertification, continue to strengthen our resolve that the best and most effective method to combat desertification and drought is to assume a collective global approach.

The successful and efficient operation of the global mechanism will depend on the collective support and contributions of all the States parties. It is only in this way that we can coordinate our efforts and develop realistic and coherent long-term initiatives in addressing desertification and drought. We call on the international community to continue to cooperate in the implementation of this Convention and in the so urgently needed provision of more coordinated assistance to Africa, which continues to suffer acutely and without respite from desertification and drought.

Lastly, my delegation strongly supports the adoption of a resolution that will enable the secretariat of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to continue to function during the interim period before the Convention enters into force.

Mr. Cissé (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): It need hardly be recalled that the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, was an African initiative that received the support of the international community. This Convention, which arose from a recommendation in Agenda 21 of the Rio Conference, is a new step towards the goal of sustainable development. Thus, the Convention, that will now be known as the Paris Convention to Combat Desertification, was signed by 87 States on 14 and 15 October 1994 at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris.

The Convention defines "desertification" as reduction or loss, in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, of the biological or economic productivity resulting from deterioration of the properties of soil, from soil erosion, and from degradation and long-term loss of natural vegetation. In other words, the Convention allows the issue of desertification to be addressed in terms not only of its physical, biological or climatic causes but also its economic and social aspects, including the problem of poverty. It is thus a legal instrument that solemnly commits States parties to cooperating in a spirit of solidarity in taking up the global challenge of environment and development. Moreover, the global dimension of desertification and drought has been established by the recognition that priority must be accorded to Africa in the combat against desertification, as stated in General Assembly resolution 47/188 and forcefully reaffirmed in an operational annex

accompanying the annexes relating specifically to other regions.

The desertification Convention is a new approach to cooperation and partnership between North and South, between the industrialized and the developing countries, with a view to better mobilizing resources to combat desertification, either in the elaboration and implementation of programmes or in research and information technologies that stress traditional know-how and local technologies. The Convention is innovative because action will take place at every level and will be based on the effective participation of the affected populations and on cooperation with donors, international and regional institutions and non-governmental organizations.

The consultation process should result in partnership agreements that will ensure better coordination of bilateral and multilateral cooperative activities. The aim of the Convention is above all to help the populations of affected areas to establish the conditions of an environment conducive to sustainable development. Indeed, only concrete results in the field will allow us to gauge the effectiveness of programmes and measures intended to eradicate poverty and guarantee food security and renewed sustainable rural development. In this context, the Convention to combat desertification brings hope to those populations whose daily lives are affected by the scourge of land degradation and natural resources in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas.

To be sure, an enterprise on such a scale requires financial and technical resources sufficient to combat desertification on Earth, where almost one billion men and women suffer from the effects of desertification and drought.

It is therefore urgent, through creative and fruitful international cooperation, to take up that challenge on the African continent — cradle of humankind, repository of immense potential wealth, but home, as well, to the two largest deserts in the world.

Against that background, the Commission on Sustainable Development will have to pay particular attention to the viable management of land and water resources; the utilization of soils; sustainable agriculture; forests, dry lands and mountains; and to sources of energy.

The Convention offers the possibility of solving those problems by relying on scientific and technical knowledge

and by giving a powerful boost to the will to cooperate and to international solidarity.

In any case, the Convention, as a legal instrument, provides the tools and follow-up machinery to assess, through informatics and telecommunications, the promotion of the observation, collection, analysis and systematic exchange of data in matters of preventing drought and controlling desertification.

The Paris Convention on desertification is not a meaningless construct but rather the common achievement of all those who took part in difficult and serious negotiations aimed at defining the responsibilities and mutual obligations of all partners, for the greater good of humankind.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate all the negotiators and to express our gratitude to the President of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, His Excellency Ambassador Bo Kjellén, who directed the work of that group with great effectiveness and finesse.

Let me also express our gratitude to Mr. Hama Arba Diallo, that worthy son of Africa, who has been assuming competently and devotedly the functions of Executive Secretary of the Committee, assisted by a dynamic team whose reputation is well established.

Senegal, which signed the Convention, will as of now undertake the ratification procedure with the firm hope that this new instrument will allow us to better test the beginnings of a new spirit of solidarity and cooperation for sustainable development in all parts of the world, especially in Africa.

So let us look to the future, as did St. Exupéry, a poet of action, a great humanist and a man who knew about outer space and deserts, who said:

"To be human means precisely to be responsible. It means feeling ashamed in the face of a poverty that does not seem to depend on oneself. It means that, when laying a building block, you are contributing to building the world."

May this message, rich in fraternity, light our way in the struggle against desertification on the planet.

Closer to us, just a few months ago, Pierre Gilles deGennes, graduate of the *Ecole normale supérieure* and Nobel laureate in physics, said that the struggle against

desertification is a project that should mobilize technical and scientific knowhow, financial resources, the enthusiasm of youth and human solidarity.

For its part, Senegal feels that the commitments undertaken and the contribution announcements made, on both the bilateral and multilateral levels, at the signing ceremony of the Convention in Paris are a promising foundation for the future.

We are convinced that once the Convention is ratified and implemented, it will have to live up to the immense hopes raised by the advent of such an international instrument for combating desertification with the aim of fostering sustainable development in Africa and in the world.

Mr. Gallegos (United States of America): We have before us a number of issues regarding the recently concluded United Nations Convention on Desertification. These are procedural matters, with one important exception: the resolution on urgent action for Africa.

The United States signed the Convention in Paris on October 14, and we have been among its strongest supporters from the outset. The objective of this agreement is the sustainable development of dry lands worldwide. Its relevance to the economic development and environmental health of a significant proportion of the world's population is well known. Its implementation will be of critical importance in achieving food security and ending the threat of malnutrition and famine in Africa. The United States has identified approximately \$500 million in current or planned projects which can be utilized to support the Convention in a number of ways.

The specific issues before us are as follows:

First, with respect to "Urgent action for Africa" (A/49/84/Add.2, resolution 5/1), this proposal calls on all parties concerned to begin taking steps to prepare for the implementation of the Convention, even before it enters into force. We strongly support this provision. The Convention mandates a locally initiated implementation process featuring partnership arrangements between local communities and non-governmental organizations, national Governments, and, where necessary, aid donors, centered in national capitals.

This process was designed to reflect the reality that circumstances vary greatly from country to country and

that implementation cannot be driven by a formula imposed from outside.

Now is the time for African countries to begin considering how they want to use this Convention to meet their own anti-desertification priorities, to begin thinking about the kind of local partnerships they want, and to survey the state of their existing anti-desertification plans and programmes. The purpose of this resolution is to encourage support for this vital preparation phase so as to jump-start the implementation process when the Convention enters into force. We strongly support the resolution and trust that it will not be in any way controversial.

Secondly, with respect to the dates and duration of meetings of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, the Committee's draft resolution (A/49/84/Add.2, resolution 5/2) was approved at the last Committee session in Paris. In the intense period of final negotiations, there was no time to discuss its contents. The two-week period was originally proposed at a time when it was believed that additional regional annexes would remain to be negotiated, but, thanks to the hard work of everyone concerned, all the annexes in question were approved.

The major challenge facing the Convention now is implementation of that "Urgent action". Other major policy issues, such as the organization to house the Global Mechanism — Article 21 — cannot be decided before the first session of the Conference of the Parties. As noted above, we see "Urgent action" as a process that must begin in African capitals. This is where our focus should be for the time being, and it is for that reason that we have proposed reducing the January session to one week only. None of us has the resources to devote to meetings of this kind unless they are absolutely necessary.

Similarly, we are not convinced that another two-week session in Nairobi in May is necessary. In our view, discussion of further meetings in 1996 and beyond should be deferred until the one-week January session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee. I repeat that in our view the time and attention of all concerned should be focused on African capitals in the period between now and the first session of the Conference of Parties.

The responsibilities of the secretariat were the subject of considerable discussion at the fifth session of

the Committee, and the results are contained in article 23 of the Convention. Further modifications could be made by the Conference of Parties, in accordance with article 23 (2) (e). I mention this because at least one document now before us envisages a role for the secretariat considerably broader than that contained in article 23. I refer in particular to paragraph 13 of the report of the Secretary General, document A/49/477 of 5 October 1994, which suggests that the secretariat should assume the considerable burden of reviewing the preparation of action programmes and other activities undertaken under the urgent-action resolution. We strongly believe that any resolution adopted at this time should be consistent with, and not go beyond, article 23 of the Convention, as well as paragraph 14 of the proposed draft resolution on urgent action and paragraph 5 of the proposed draft resolution on interim arrangements.

Mr. Eteffa (Ethiopia): My delegation would like first of all to congratulate Ambassador Bo Kjellén, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, and Mr. Hama Arba Diallo and other members of the secretariat, for their tireless efforts in producing this exemplary international instrument.

We would like to endorse the statement made by Ambassador Lamamra of Algeria, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the very important issue under consideration.

We recall that during its forty-seventh session, in 1992, the General Assembly adopted resolution 47/188, calling for the establishment of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, with a view to finalizing such a convention by June 1994. Thus, the International Convention to combat desertification and drought has been finalized on time and, in addition, a considerable number of countries have already signed, during the recent signing ceremony held in Paris. We commend this achievement and urge those countries that have not yet signed to do so as soon as possible. We also ask those countries that have signed the Convention to take all necessary measures to expedite the ratification process.

The finalization of the text of the Convention is a great stride forward in our endeavour to tackle the problems of drought and desertification. However, the Convention is not an end in itself. What is most important is that we should focus on implementing the objectives of the Convention. The question of speedy implementation of

this international instrument is most relevant in Africa, where 50 to 60 per cent of the land area has been desertified and where millions of people face recurrent and devastating drought, famine and starvation.

It is true that all regions of the world suffer from desertification and drought, but the African nations are the most vulnerable and are the least able to combat these problems without meaningful international cooperation, partnership and assistance. That is why we in Africa are very concerned about the financial resources for the implementation of the Convention.

In this regard, my delegation would like to appeal once again to our partners in developed countries and in the United Nations system to make available adequate, timely and predictable financial resources and technical assistance, especially for the least developed and most severely affected African countries.

Moreover, a series of consultation meetings should be conducted between the adoption of the Convention and the first meeting of the Conference of Parties; it is imperative to ensure the effective participation in this process of developing countries, in particular the least developed among them. Therefore, my delegation appeals to Governments and organizations to make voluntary contributions to the extrabudgetary fund established under resolution 47/188.

Ethiopia, as one of the most severely affected countries, is fully aware of its responsibility to fight the problems of drought that threaten the lives of millions of its people. With this in view, the Ethiopian Government has taken important measures to mitigate the effects of recurrent drought. Recently we finalized a national conservation strategy and commenced a \$1.2-billion-dollar forestry action programme. The decentralization and democratization process initiated by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia some three years ago has created an excellent environment conducive to the participation of the local people in the preparation and implementation of the development and environmental-protection action programmes. We in Ethiopia feel that the participation of the people at all levels is of paramount importance.

The Ethiopian Government has also adopted a disaster-prevention and preparedness policy and strategies and has established disaster preparedness committees at the central, regional, zonal and community levels. These and other measures taken by Ethiopia demonstrate the Government's commitment to combating drought and

desertification. However, we realize that national efforts will not bear fruit without the support of the international community. That is why we urge the immediate implementation of urgent action for Africa as stipulated in resolution 5/1 adopted during the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee.

The question of drought and desertification and how to combat them should be seen in the light of African economic and social development. The implementation of the objectives of the Convention should be carried out with the close cooperation of the Economic Commission for Africa, the Organization of African Unity and other international and intergovernmental organizations. The solution to the multifaceted and critical problems of Africa can be found only in a unified and integrated approach to development. The Convention at hand should thus complement that approach by effectively addressing problems related to drought and desertification.

In the light of the critical and fast-deteriorating situation prevailing in Africa, the Convention, especially in its article 7, gives explicit priority to that continent. Therefore, my delegation feels that it is most appropriate that the Convention secretariat should be located in Africa. However, the question of the permanent secretariat, including its exact location in Africa, should be a subject of discussion during the Conference of Parties. My delegation will present concrete proposals in that connection at the appropriate time and place.

Mr. Pak (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. Muthaura (Kenya): I wish to join the delegations that have spoken before me in welcoming the conclusion of the elaboration of the International Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa.

I wish also to express our congratulations to the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, Ambassador Bo Kjeilén of Sweden, and the Secretariat, in particular Ambassador Diallo, for having steered the negotiating process so ably within the time-frame and achieving this important Convention. It is significant that many countries have already signed the Convention, and some countries have already made substantial financial pledges in its support. We hope that the ratification process will be completed as quickly as possible so that the Convention may enter into force.

Countries such as my own, which are prone to drought and desertification, have great expectations from the implementation of the Action Programmes contained in the Convention. At the national level, Action Programmes embrace the mobilization of local populations and non-governmental organizations, as well as scientific and technological efforts, within an integrated long-term policy commitment for combating and mitigating the effects of drought and desertification. At the international level, a critical element in ensuring the success of the strategy, as envisaged in the Convention, is the establishment of a financial mechanism to promote actions leading to the mobilization and channelling of substantial financial resources, with emphasis on multiple-source financing. In this regard, stress has been put on partnership agreements bringing together affected countries, developed and other countries as well as international organizations, to support the preparation and implementation of the Action Programmes. In our view, the concrete responses that the Convention will be able to attract from donor countries and international organizations in terms of resource allocations will, by and large, determine the impact the Convention will have on the local mobilization efforts to tackle the drought and desertification effects on the environment and achieve sustainable development. We therefore appeal to the donor community to make available sufficient resources to the Convention's financing mechanism.

It is fitting that the Convention on desertification and drought has been adopted at the time when the international community has adopted the Plan of Action for Population and Development and is preparing for the related World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Habitat II Conference, all of which are aimed at tackling the problems of poverty and environmental degradation and mobilizing efforts towards the achievement of sustainable development from different perspectives. Desertification and drought deprive the population of the basic requirements of livelihood, food, water, firewood and shelter. The impact of this scenario is experienced in Africa more than in other regions, inasmuch as 66 per cent of the continent is desert or dry land and 73 per cent of the agricultural dry lands are already degraded.

The interim measures which have been proposed by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, especially with regard to the need for an adequate financial allocation to support the interim secretariat and Committee meetings, are practicable and, therefore, we

support them. We also consider the proposal by the Secretariat for provisions to convene two Committee meetings in 1995, two meetings in 1996 and one meeting in 1997 to be reasonable for planning purposes, without excluding the possibility of additional meetings if the Committee deems them necessary.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to thank the countries that have generously contributed to the voluntary fund which supported the participation of delegations from developing countries in the negotiating process. We hope that the fund will be replenished to assist the participation of those delegations during the interim period.

Ms. Mompei (Botswana): Botswana, as one of the many countries around the globe, and particularly in Africa, which is grossly affected by both drought and desertification, welcomes the successful conclusion of the negotiations on the elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa.

Botswana participated in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, at which countries displayed interest and concern on the issue of drought and desertification. Botswana's interest in this issue culminated in its participation in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee.

The adverse climatic conditions of Botswana dictate our need to recognize this important international initiative. In Botswana, the desert occupies about 80 per cent of the total land area. It is characterized by frequent and prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall patterns, sand layers of up to 1 metre or more in certain areas, unbearably high summer temperatures and a thinly distributed savanna-type of vegetation. In addition, the socio-economic factors, which include the unevenly distributed and fast-growing population, the concentrated livestock-rearing activities and the poor arable farming practices, aggravate the already vulnerable landscape of Botswana.

At the national level, land degradation has always been of major concern to Botswana. Different land ministries have drawn up policies and programmes and even enacted laws to address this issue. In 1990, my Government formulated a strategy and established the Botswana National Conservation Strategy Agency, whose aims are, first, to increase the effectiveness with which natural resources are used and managed so that interactions

are optimized and harmful environmental side-effects minimized and, secondly, to integrate the work of the many sectoral ministries and interest groups throughout Botswana, thereby improving the development of natural resources through conservation and so forth.

The recommendations of the Rio Summit and now the Convention to combat drought and desertification will complement the existing national efforts to address these environmental issues. For instance, Botswana has prepared an action plan for the Boteti area, which is in the central part of the country, with the financial assistance of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee of the Convention.

National efforts to combat desertification become meaningless if regional cooperation is lacking. In this context, Botswana has started to consult its neighbours to prepare the Kgalagadi-Namib Action Plan to combat desertification. The Southern African Development Community (SADC), which is a subregional body, can also be used to foster this kind of cooperation. It is hoped that this Plan, which includes Angola, Namibia, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe, will in the foreseeable future welcome South Africa.

In conclusion, we urge the international community to work tirelessly towards achieving the objectives of this important Convention.

Mr. Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso) (*interpretation from French*): The two scourges of desertification and drought assail all the regions of our planet and have increasingly and continually caused the disappearance of vegetation and fertile soils. Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 raised the urgent need of facing up to this problem.

On 14 October last in Paris 87 States signed the international Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. This came about as a result of an African initiative decided upon in Abidjan in November 1991 and introduced in Rio de Janeiro at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The legal framework thus laid down assures a balance between recognition of the global nature of the desertification problem and recognition of the specific nature of regional situations.

The negotiating process was difficult, intense and rewarding. Ambassador Bo Kjellén deserves our gratitude for the devotion, experience and inexhaustible patience he

demonstrated in leading a particularly dynamic Bureau, with the assistance of an effective secretariat led by Ambassador Hama Arba Diallo. All involved should be thanked for the accomplishment of their task, which marked the beginning of a new stage in the battle against desertification and drought.

We now have a legal instrument that is innovative in many ways and that recognizes the integrated approach as a suitable way to achieve security for the environment and for development. The fight against desertification will thus integrate socio-economic and cultural realities within an environmental context. The annexed resolution on "Urgent action for Africa" envisages, *inter alia*, a partnership between local populations and non-governmental organizations in the development and execution of programmes of action, as well as the integration of programmes of action aimed at combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought into national policies for sustainable development.

Burkina Faso, which is the site of the headquarters of the Inter-State Committee on combating drought in the Sahel, has implemented a national programme of action for the environment whose elements are inspired by all of the foregoing. While Africa is not the only region affected and afflicted, it is there where the ravages of drought and desertification have occurred fastest and been most serious. The Sahel is evidence of this fact.

The phenomenon of desertification affects 25 per cent of our planet. Sixty-six per cent of the African continent is affected. Of the 600 million people in Africa, 185 million are affected, in more than 40 countries.

Given the lack of results from the Nairobi Programme of Action of 1977, the acuteness of this ecological problem and its repercussions on Africa's economy and social foundations have been such that only a concerted, solid and active strategy against desertification and drought could be seen as a beginning in solving a problem that, through both its extent and its effects, affects the entire planet.

This is fundamental. One can never emphasize too much that the necessary resources must be provided and the institutional financial and follow-up machinery called for in the Convention must become operational as early as possible.

My delegation places its hopes in resolute, vigorous implementation of the concept of partnership and solidarity in the fight against desertification so that those societies

that have been weakened by this scourge can be restored to normalcy and so that, wherever the environment has been wounded, it can be healed to the greatest extent possible.

This must be done so that many, many human beings in many places can, as we dream in the Sahel, finally experience again the soft wind over the grass, heading for the trees in the distance.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 2011 (XX) of 11 October 1965, I now call on the Observer for the Organization of African Unity.

Mr. Sy (Organization of African Unity): The Organization of African Unity welcomes the conclusion of the negotiations and the signing of the international Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. We see this as an important step towards the implementation of Agenda 21, as agreed upon by the international community in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

In this respect, my delegation would also like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, Ambassador Bo Kjellén, the Executive Secretary, Ambassador Arba Diallo, and the other members of the Committee, all of whom ensured that the Convention was prepared by the deadline.

The Convention is very significant for Africa, as it is directly related to some of the primary issues at the heart of underdevelopment and the aggravation of poverty in many African countries. For many African countries desert encroachment and increasing bouts of drought are issues which deserve urgent solutions in order to increase agricultural output and to assure a better and higher standard of living for the growing population. In this context, African countries have, at both the individual and collective levels, felt that enough resources should be mobilized to cope with the technical demands and lead to a permanent solution. The devastating effects of desertification and drought must be checked if Africa is to have a firm basis for sustainable development.

With this objective in view, African countries have collectively, through the Organization of African Unity, worked very hard with their partners in the international community for the conclusion of an instrument which

would enhance their efforts at sustainable development. The high interest in, and dedication to, the implementation of the Convention is illustrated in the Council of Ministers' resolution CM/RES 1535 (LX) of June 1994, which *inter alia*, requests the OAU Secretary-General to take appropriate steps as part of the execution of the international Convention and the Regional Implementation Annex for Africa to establish institutional and operational links with regional economic communities and intergovernmental institutions.

The United Nations Convention to combat desertification is unique, as it is basically concerned with the elaboration of action programmes at the national and subregional levels, through a consultative and participatory process. Among other things, it consists of a strategy which underscores the participation of local populations and non-governmental organizations in the preparation and implementation of action programmes. Likewise, it encourages the integration of action programmes in national policies for sustainable development. All these policies, we believe, are vital for the implementation of the Convention.

However, the Convention will be meaningful in the context of sustainable development if it is implemented effectively and promptly. At this point, therefore, the OAU would like to call on the international community for increased political support for and commitment to its implementation. National Parliaments should speed up the process of ratification to ensure that the minimum of 50 ratifications by Member States required for the Convention to come into force is secured in the least possible time.

In addition, the question of funding should continue to be reviewed in order to enhance the Convention's coming into operation. The capacity of the Global Environment Facility to fund the Convention should be strengthened, and additional complementary funding arrangements should be provided when these are necessary. The whole world stands to benefit from living on a planet where the menace of desertification and drought is effectively contained.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this agenda sub-item.

In accordance with the decision taken by the Assembly at its 30th plenary meeting, action on the sub-item will be taken in the Second Committee.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (d) of agenda item 89.

Agenda item 22

Assistance in mine clearance

Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/357 and Add.1)

Draft resolution (A/49/L.8)

Amendment (A/49/L.11)

The President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution, issued as document A/49/L.8, and an amendment to it, submitted by Honduras, contained in document A/49/L.11.

I call on the representative of Germany to introduce the draft resolution.

Mr. Henze (Germany): A year ago, at the General Assembly's forty-eighth session, the 12 member States of the European Community requested the inclusion of the item entitled "Assistance in mine clearance" on the Assembly's agenda and initiated a draft resolution, which the Assembly subsequently adopted without a vote. In continuation of that initiative, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/49/L.8 on behalf of its 63 sponsors. I ask for the Assembly's indulgence as I read out the list.

The sponsors of draft resolution A/49/L.8 are: Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mauritius, Micronesia, Monaco, Mongolia, Mozambique, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Viet Nam.

Before briefly outlining the contents of the draft resolution, I wish to thank sincerely all the delegations that have given it their support and contributed constructively to its drafting. I should also like to express our deep gratitude to the members of the Secretariat who have shared their experience with us.

The reason why we are submitting the draft resolution remains unchanged since last year. It is the catastrophic situation created by the massive presence of mines and other unexploded devices in countries that have experienced armed conflict, a situation that persists and has been further aggravated.

In the second preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/49/L.8 the Assembly would affirm its deep concern at the tremendous humanitarian problem caused by the presence of mines and other unexploded devices. Such devices have serious and lasting consequences for the populations of affected countries. They kill and maim, and they constitute an obstacle to the return of refugees and other displaced persons, to humanitarian aid operations, to reconstruction and economic development as well as to the restoration of normal social conditions.

In the third and fourth preambular paragraphs the Assembly would stress its grave alarm at the ever-increasing presence of mines and other unexploded devices as a result of armed conflicts. The Assembly would also express its deep concern that the number of mines laid each year exponentially outweighs the number that can be cleared during that time. As the Secretary-General pointed out in his report, between 2 million and 5 million mines are being laid each year, to add to the more than 110 million land mines that have already been laid in 64 countries around the world.

In the fifth and sixth preambular paragraphs, the Assembly would reiterate its dismay at the high number of victims of mines, especially among civilian populations, and bear in mind the serious threat that they constitute to the safety, health and lives of personnel participating in humanitarian, peace-keeping and rehabilitation programmes.

In the seventh and eighth preambular paragraphs the Assembly would recall its resolution 48/79 relating to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects, and its resolution 48/75 K, calling for a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land-mines.

In the following preambular paragraphs the Assembly would focus on the important role of the United Nations and on the measures and activities already undertaken.

In operative paragraph 1 the Assembly would express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his

comprehensive report and would take note with interest of his proposals, as well as of the contributions by Member States and others.

In operative paragraphs 2 and 3 the Assembly would welcome the establishment by the Secretary-General of a voluntary trust fund to finance, in particular, information and training programmes relating to mine clearance and to facilitate the launching of mine clearance operations. The Assembly would also appeal to Member States and others to contribute to the trust fund.

The following operative paragraphs address the coordination role of the United Nations. In operative paragraph 6, the Assembly would commend the Secretary-General for his efforts to make use of available resources to strengthen that role and would encourage him to continue those efforts with a view to improving the effectiveness of assistance in mine clearance by the United Nations. In operative paragraph 8 the Assembly would urge Member States, regional organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations and foundations to continue to extend full assistance and cooperation to the Secretary-General and, in particular, to provide him with all relevant information and data, as well as other pertinent resources which could be useful in strengthening the coordination role of the United Nations.

Draft resolution A/49/L.8, which is before the General Assembly today, reflects the international community's great concern at the devastating effects of mines and other unexploded devices in countries emerging from armed conflict. On behalf of the sponsors, I should like to express the hope that it will be adopted without a vote.

I should like to use this opportunity to say a few words on behalf of the European Union, Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

We have noted with interest the proposals made by the Secretary-General in his report. Many of them need further careful analysis. Nevertheless, the tremendous accumulation of anti-personnel land-mines and other unexploded devices in countries emerging from armed conflict is an urgent problem that requires a strong and coordinated international response. It is precisely the urgency, indeed the immediacy, of the threat to the lives and health of a large number of civilians, especially children, that has prompted us to focus this draft resolution on the humanitarian aspect of the problem. Each month, more than 800 people are killed and

thousands more are maimed by unexploded devices, especially anti-personnel land-mines. Given the high cost of clearing land mines, in particular when maps or other records showing their locations do not exist, it is of paramount importance that the available resources be used effectively and in a coordinated manner.

The President: I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be now closed.

It was so decided.

Mr. Maruyama (Japan): Land-mines are one of the most troubling problems confronting the international community in this post-cold-war period.

It is reported that the number of mines deployed is increasing by 500,000 to 1 million each year, and that they kill more than 800 people every month, while mine detection and clearance technology has not made much progress.

Land-mines obstruct the peace-building process conducted by the international community in the aftermath of conflicts. They hinder, and in some instances prevent, peace-keeping operations, the delivery of relief supplies, the repatriation of refugees and the rehabilitation and improvement of basic infrastructure, as the Secretary-General notes in his comprehensive report on this subject. Countries that have suffered through war must suffer further because of land-mines, which continue to impede the process of national reconstruction long afterwards.

The Secretary-General informs us that there are more than 110 million land-mines spread in 64 countries around the world — countries such as Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia and Mozambique — with 2 to 5 million more laid each year.

Since de-mining requires a tremendous investment of time and money, it is essential that the international community provide assistance to those countries engaged in such work. In this connection, my delegation would like to stress the urgency of promoting research and development in mine detection and clearance technology to make mine clearance activities safer and more efficient, and requests that the United Nations coordinate such research and development, in view of the failure of mine detection and clearance technology to keep pace with the rapid progress of mine technology. It is also important that the international community consider establishing a mechanism

to restrict the production, use and transfer of all land-mines, especially anti-personnel mines.

Japan is pleased that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has been named by the Secretary-General to be the focal point within the United Nations for all de-mining and land-mine problems, as well as to provide support, assistance and advice to other United Nations agencies. The United Nations should play the central role in providing assistance in mine clearance, with the cooperation of regional organizations such as the Organization of American States, and it is highly likely that the role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs as focal point within the United Nations will soon be further strengthened. In this context, my delegation takes note with great interest of the launching of the database on the land-mine problem by that Department, in cooperation with the Department of Peace-keeping Operations — a database that is certain to become indispensable to the formulation of measures on de-mining. Japan also appreciates the efforts of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations to establish a set of standards of operation and safety procedures for mine action programmes, as they will facilitate coordination of the de-mining efforts of the international community.

We note with interest that a voluntary trust fund to finance, in particular, information and training programmes relating to mine clearance is being created under the management of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and request that the terms of reference, which are now being worked out with the Department of Administration and Management, be provided to Member States. Since adequate financing is necessary for the effective implementation of the programme, Japan will consider carefully the possibility of making a contribution to the trust fund after the terms of reference are issued. I would just add that Japan has provided assistance to de-mining operations in Somalia and Afghanistan, and in March of this year it gave \$2.5 million to the United Nations Development Programme's Trust Fund for Capacity-Building in De-Mining Operations for Cambodia.

I have just heard the introductory statement on draft resolution A/49/L.8 made by the representative of Germany, Ambassador Henze, on behalf of the European Union. The draft resolution contains strong arguments and constructive proposals, and we note that it stresses the importance of coordination by the United Nations of activities related to mine clearance. My Government

appreciates the initiative taken by the member countries of the European Union in drawing the attention of the world to this most pressing problem, and it is honoured to join in sponsoring this draft resolution.

In concluding my statement, I wish to assure the President of the Assembly that the Government of Japan will continue to extend cooperation to efforts to clear mines from the battlefields of the world. Japan hopes that, for its part, the United Nations, with its extensive expertise and experience in this field, will make further efforts to coordinate the activities of the international community, individual countries and international and non-governmental organizations, so that together we can achieve an early solution to this problem.

Mr. Westdal (Canada): Mines and unexploded ordnance pose a serious threat to the lives and livelihoods of millions of people — mostly civilians — throughout the world. Mines threaten peace-keepers and humanitarian workers and are a serious obstacle to development. Indeed in Cambodia the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) identified land-mines as the single biggest impediment to that country's rehabilitation. Canada took the lead in supporting the Cambodian Mine-Action Centre's continued operation following the withdrawal of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). Twelve Canadians still form the nucleus of international support for the Centre.

Canada has been involved in 33 United Nations peace-keeping missions around the world. Close to 8,000 Canadian soldiers have risked their lives clearing mines in countries such as Kuwait, Afghanistan and Nicaragua. Five Canadians have been killed or injured. Our soldiers are today clearing mines in Cambodia, Croatia, Bosnia and Rwanda.

Canada welcomes the Secretary-General's report on assistance in mine clearance and commends the establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs as a focal point within the United Nations for coordinating mine clearance and related activities.

We recognize that States have the primary role in mine-clearing activities, but the United Nations has an important role to play in assisting Member States. We believe that as a focal point for United Nations coordination, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs can provide invaluable assistance, particularly through mine-clearing information and training programmes. We also strongly support the United Nations's efforts to establish

"country capacity for mine action" as part of its "nation-building" programmes.

Long after hostilities have ceased in a region, and when the world's attention may well be turned elsewhere, uncleared mines, often numbering hundreds of thousands, can pose an overwhelming threat to normal life and to development efforts. Countries must be able to establish and undertake mine-clearing programmes which will systematically and effectively ensure the safety of their citizens, thereby allowing the most rapid return of each country's development potential.

Canada welcomes the establishment of the voluntary trust fund for mine-clearing activities. Clearing mines is expensive. Resources are needed to ensure that the United Nations can fulfil its coordinating role successfully and efficiently. An example of that role is the current mine-clearing platoons already in the field in Mozambique, along with the secondment of technical advisers, the establishment of a school for trainees, and a tender for a management-training scheme. There is much to be learned from the Department of Humanitarian Affairs' initial coordination programmes. We believe that these efforts can only lead to a greater coherence in all phases of United Nations involvement. For its part, Canada will continue to contribute to mine clearing in a variety of ways, primarily through peace-keeping operations. The Secretary-General has estimated that a typical mine-clearing operation costs between \$300 and \$1,000 per mine. Canada would hope and urge that other countries would demonstrate a comparable commitment to United Nations mine-clearance efforts by helping, directly or indirectly, to shoulder the financial burden.

My delegation is pleased to add Canada's name to the list of sponsors of the draft resolution before the General Assembly on assistance in mine clearance. Canada will continue to extend its direct support through the practical expertise and technical assistance it has sponsored throughout the years.

Mr. Farhadi (Afghanistan): My delegation does not find it necessary to emphasize the disastrous effects of land-mines, which threaten the present generation of humanity, as well as the generations that will follow, in so many parts of the world. We are very grateful to the delegation of Germany, which, in cooperation with other Western European States, North European States and Australia, worked on the preparation of the draft resolution now before us in document A/49/L.8.

I recognize the great sympathy of these countries — Germany, Japan and Canada — whose representatives spoke before me, for those countries affected by land-mines. It is important to thank them because they are among the countries that are helping us, Afghanistan, in the work of mine clearance.

I wish to draw the attention of all those present here to the fact that this draft resolution is mainly of a procedural character. Although it contains some important points, it is mainly a repetition of what was said last year while taking into consideration a few facts.

We have been in contact with the delegation of Germany and have had a very friendly exchange of views. We are deeply concerned that with the advancement of technology, mines and other explosive devices are becoming increasingly non-detectable, or difficult to detect. That has been stated in the report but it should appear in one of the texts to be adopted as a resolution. We are deeply concerned at the number of mines equipped with anti-handling devices.

On the subject of mine-clearance activity around the world, it is important to recognize, as experience has shown, that the most cost-effective clearance teams are those composed of civilian mine-clearance workers recruited locally and trained by experts provided through international assistance. We must, therefore, call upon States and appropriate international organizations and non-governmental organizations to promote, as a matter of priority, scientific research aimed at the rapid advancement of mine-clearance technology.

The problem is that the production of land-mines is technologically advanced while mine-clearance technology lags behind. Something must be done and there are States and organizations that are able to do something.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (A/49/357 and Add.1) and especially the creation of a section within the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to deal with the matter. But that new section is very small and cannot cope with all the responsibilities incumbent on it. In order to enhance the role of the existing mine-clearance section and to establish an office of mine clearing under the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, it is important that, among other things, the Secretary-General, should, first, study on a continuing basis the problems of land-mines and mine clearance in war-stricken countries.

Secondly, it should serve as a coordinating body for all the activities at the national, subregional and international levels to be performed by non-governmental organizations in the field of mine awareness, training, survey, mine clearance and scientific research for mine-clearance technology.

Thirdly, where appropriate, the office has to initiate tripartite agreements between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, non-governmental organizations and Governments concerned, thus ensuring successful mine-clearance awareness and training projects and programmes.

Fourthly, the office has to coordinate and promote the activities of Government and non-governmental organizations that are assisting the developing war-stricken countries by providing prostheses for adults and children who are victims of land mines and booby traps.

Fifthly, the office is to facilitate contacts and promote the conclusion of agreements between the most affected countries and the donor Governments and non-governmental organizations in the field of mine clearance.

All of that is important and is based on long years of experience by Afghanistan, the country most affected by land mines after a terrible war of aggression.

All these points will require many exchanges of views. Such exchanges are taking place now, but in a haphazard way. My delegation therefore, proposes that, since the question is urgent and is becoming progressively more disastrous with the passage of time, we decide to convene a global conference in 1995 to study the problem of land-mine and land-mine clearance. If the word "conference" seems too official, it could be called an international meeting of mine-clearance experts. The object would be to draft and adopt an international strategy on mine clearance, as well as ways and means of alleviating the disastrous consequences of land-mines in war-stricken countries.

With this in mind we have submitted the text of amendments which my delegation proposes to the draft resolution contained in document A/49/L.8. The amendments address the broader activities of the Section in the Secretariat dealing with the question of mine clearance and the need for scientific research aimed at the rapid advancement of mine-clearance technology, and would request the Secretary-General to convene, in 1995,

an international meeting of experts on assistance in mine clearance, in order to promote the work of the United Nations and international cooperation in this field.

I therefore propose that all delegations sponsoring draft resolution A/49/L.8 study these points and, if they agree, on the amendments there will be no need to vote on them separately and they can be considered as included in the text. In that case, the delegation of Afghanistan will join the sponsors of the draft which, at this time, we consider insufficient.

Mr. Noterdaeme (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*): May I begin by wholly associating myself with the statement made by the representative of Germany on behalf of the European Union, who rightly emphasized the humanitarian aspect and urgency of assistance in mine clearance.

Two world conflicts left many regions in Belgium infested by mines and other unexploded devices. For more than 75 years and with an average of 3,200 interventions each year, my country has developed experience in matters of mine clearance. This know-how has been put into practice in Cambodia through the participation of a Belgian mine-clearance team working under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and in cooperation with the Cambodian mine action centre. I take this opportunity to announce that Belgium has decided to maintain its contribution to this type of action within the framework of the United Nations.

In addition, on the basis of Belgium's experience I can speak about the scope of the problem. If three quarters of a century after the end of hostilities abandoned munitions continue to kill indiscriminately despite systematic mine-clearing actions, what will happen in countries where vast stretches of land are infested by millions of mines which have been blindly sown?

The great merit of the Secretary-General's report is that it has clarified the scope and complexity of the task before us as well as the urgent need to coordinate international efforts for assistance in mine clearance. The success of rescue operations, repatriation and of bringing people back into society, as well as economic recovery, will all remain compromised until we have settled the problem of mines.

The Secretary-General's designation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs as a focal point for assistance in mine clearance and the establishment of the

Mine Action Section are important first steps towards solving this problem.

Another, no less important, aspect is that of the necessary financial resources. In this regard, Belgium hails the establishment by the Secretary-General of a voluntary trust fund for assistance in mine clearance, to which it will be able at this time to make a first contribution of \$150,000.

There is another aspect the Secretary-General rightly mentioned in his report: the unchecked proliferation of mines and, in particular, of anti-personnel mines. At a time when we are seeking solutions to the presence of these devices, we note that the number of anti-personnel mines laid, often in a non-selective way, exceeds the number of mines which have been neutralized. International preventive action is therefore more than ever necessary to limit that proliferation.

In this respect, in July 1993 the Belgian Government announced an open-ended moratorium on the export and the transit of anti-personnel mines. In direct implementation of that decision, the Belgian army will begin to destroy its surplus stocks of anti-personnel mines following its restructuring. Furthermore, all mine-laying vehicles will be modified. These decisions will cost money, but they are the result of a clear moral choice: to outlaw all anti-personnel mines for ever.

Finally, I wish to emphasize the crucial role of the conference to review the 1980 inhumane weapons Convention. Belgium is participating in the work of the group of experts that is preparing for that conference, with priority being given to the review of Protocol II. Belgium is now in a position to announce that the process for ratification of the inhumane weapons convention has been completed and that the instruments of ratification will very soon be deposited at the United Nations. Belgium will therefore participate in the 1995 review conference as a State party.

While it is true that, as Mr. Eliasson said when he was the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, the presence of mines in countries is a war of time bombs, it is just as true that some countries can lose that war if the international community does not coordinate and intensify its efforts to help them overcome their tribulations.

The draft resolution before the Assembly is an important step in that direction. I would therefore like to

conclude by expressing the hope that it will be adopted, as a similar draft resolution was last year, by consensus and with a maximum of sponsors.

Mrs. Vidal (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The international community has begun to be aware of the tragedy that the production, proliferation, and exportation of conventional weapons constitute for mankind. Wars strike at countries' social and economic development, sidetracking them from the natural path of development and progress to which they rightly aspire in a world where inequalities are becoming virulent and unacceptable on the eve of the twenty-first century.

Therefore, exporting countries must renounce the selfishness that comes from mercantilism, forgo the fat profits amassed at the cost of the devastation of defenceless peoples, and adopt genuinely effective measures to alleviate the suffering of thousands of men, women and children, mainly in developing countries. These are the innocent victims of the sale and indiscriminate use of conventional weapons, among which we must especially condemn anti-personnel mines, true "crops of death", as they have been quite rightly dubbed by one of the major Colombian media.

Our country has for a number of years been exerting efforts to make the international community aware of the disastrous social, political and economic effects of arms transfers — in particular, illegal arms trafficking. Colombia agrees with the following observation made by a delegate at a recent meeting of the International Committee of the Red Cross:

"Mines can be described as combatants that never miss a shot, that attack indiscriminately, that carry concealed weapons and that victimize people long after the cessation of hostilities. Mines are the greatest violators of international humanitarian rights and practise an inconceivable kind of terrorism".

Supporting that quotation are the figures disclosed in the Secretary-General's report in document A/49/357, where he estimates that there are more than 110 million unexploded land-mines spread in 64 countries, that between 2 and 5 million more are being laid each year, and that more than 800 people per month — people who are not involved in any conflict — are killed or suffer permanent injury as a result of the ever-increasing presence of mines, especially in agricultural areas.

We therefore welcome the initiatives concerning mines that have been moving forward in the General Assembly, both on assistance in mine clearance and on the proposed moratorium on the exporting of anti-personnel mines. We believe that the success of these initiatives will set in motion a process that can lead to the solution of the global problem created by international transfers of conventional weapons — in particular, by illegal trafficking in them.

The point made in the Secretary-General's report that mine clearance could cost between \$300 and \$1,000 per mine gives us an idea of the enormous global cost of clearing the 110 million unexploded mines to which I have referred earlier. And this does not include the millions of mines being laid every year in various countries. In this context, we believe that the total prohibition of the production, development, stockpiling, sale, exportation and use of mines in all their forms and manifestations is the only response that we can give to the affected peoples. We therefore consider it vital to continue to press at all the competent forums for their elimination.

We wish to stress that civilians in countries where there are internal conflicts suffer horrendous wounds. This is contrary to the fundamental principles of human rights. The ease with which mines can be obtained by the parties involved is one of the factors impeding a peaceful solution to these problems. The mines leave permanent fields of death, which become a burden far too heavy for States to bear. We are now seeing examples of this in various parts of our continent and others.

Thus, we agree with the Secretary-General's report in document A/49/275 on a moratorium on the exporting of anti-personnel land-mines. As indicated there, a moratorium would be easier to implement, monitor and verify, and it would guarantee more than any other measure that the indiscriminate killing and maiming of civilians occurring nowadays would ultimately cease.

The human tragedy, the problems in the normal cultivation of crops in the afflicted countries, and the high cost of clearance are, among other factors, reason enough to work together to achieve the total cessation of the production and exportation of mines. Hence, although we support the initiative of the European Union, we greatly regret that it does not contain proposals for the total eradication of the problem, by its roots. However, we hope that today's discussion will contribute to laying

the groundwork for the attainment of that goal in the near future.

With regard to the proposal to set up a trust fund for the clearance of mines, we believe that the countries producing and exporting mines, as well as those that are parties to conflict, must shoulder a special responsibility for participating in an activity that harms the physical health and the social and economic well-being of peoples and constitutes a crime against mankind.

We support the efforts being made at various forums to find a definitive solution to mine-related problems and, in general, to illicit trafficking in arms. Our purpose here must absolutely be to ensure that our commitments alleviate the suffering of the peoples affected and defend their right to life and to economic and social progress.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): New Zealand wishes to compliment the Secretary-General on his excellent report on the humanitarian problem posed by mines and on this Organization's vital role in confronting it. The report is noteworthy for its comprehensive account of the scale of the problem. The rate of proliferation of these weapons, their awful toll on civilians and the yawning gap between mine-laying and mine-clearance rates make imperative the efforts by the international community to restrict the availability of mines. New Zealand hopes that the opportunity will be taken in next year's review of the inhumane weapons Convention to strengthen the provisions relating to mines and that more Members than the current 40 will become parties to the Convention.

In addition, we were most interested in the comments made by President Clinton in his address to the General Assembly last month about proposals for the elimination of the world's 85 million anti-personnel land-mines. We look forward to working with the United States delegation in the elaboration of that proposal in the First Committee.

New Zealand has a solid record of support for this Organization's efforts in mine clearance. Over the past five years, we have made available specialist personnel for United Nations de-mining programmes in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Mozambique. We continue to participate in the work of the Cambodian Mine-Action Centre and to contribute financially towards its costs. In Mozambique, at the United Nations request, we have made available a senior military officer who took up the position of Deputy Director for De-mining in August this year in an effort to get that de-mining programme back on track. We have also provided eight de-mining instructors for the programme.

The Secretary-General has commented in his report upon the rapid expansion since 1988 in the demands upon the United Nations to provide assistance in mine clearance. We appreciate that the Organization has had to strive hard to keep pace. There is no concealing the fact that it stumbled in Mozambique, as reported by the Security Council mission which visited that country. On the other hand, it is encouraging that steps have been taken to remedy that situation. In this regard, the Secretary-General's recommendations for strengthening coordination within the Organization are most timely.

The Secretary-General's report acknowledges that there is a need to improve the effectiveness of United Nations assistance. It emphasizes most appropriately the need for the centralized compilation of lessons learned. We believe that the recommended allocation of primary responsibility for the mine-clearance field programme and headquarters support to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is sensible. We strongly support the creation of a new mine action section in the Department and the provision of the necessary staff positions through appropriate adjustments. New Zealand would also be prepared to consider contributing to the Department's proposed stand-by capacities, such as the short-term assignment of instructors or other personnel.

The Secretary-General's recommendations on the creation of a national capacity for mine clearing are also important. My delegation considers that the Cambodian Mine-Action Centre provides a useful model in this regard. From the experience of New Zealand personnel who have participated in mine-clearance programmes, we are convinced that local involvement, local management and a local stake in mine-clearance operations are basic and essential. In our view local participation should begin as early as possible in the process with a view to encouraging local ownership of the programme and local initiative.

The valuable contribution made by non-governmental organizations in mine clearance should also be recognized. A timely approach to readying these organizations for operations could obviate the need for contractors in many instances. Improved liaison with non-governmental organizations will have benefits. Recent operations have demonstrated that there is considerable military expertise available in de-mining, including expertise in providing instruction. This expertise could be channelled into assistance to non-governmental organizations to help them form their own de-mining training and supervisory teams should

they wish to participate in this way. We believe that a significant multiplier effect in terms of generating trained personnel and freeing up capacity for stand-by contributions could be gained as a result.

Finally, my delegation looks forward to the adoption of the draft resolution on this item. We are pleased to be a sponsor.

Mr. Castaneda Cornejo (El Salvador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the Central American countries — Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and El Salvador — on agenda item 22, entitled "Assistance in mine clearance".

At the outset, I should like to reiterate on behalf of our delegations our sincere congratulations on the outstanding way in which Mr. Essy is guiding the work of this session. We have no doubt that in the end we will have made important strides on the difficult road towards international peace and security.

On the issue before us, our subregion deems it of particular importance, given the painful and tragic experience our own countries have endured from the harmful and continued impact of land-mines and other unexploded devices planted in various areas throughout Central America as a result of armed conflicts. This position, underscored by our co-sponsorship in 1993 of resolution 48/7, introduced at the initiative of the members of the European Union, on assistance in mine clearance. In that resolution, the serious problems caused by mines sown in various regions and the responsibility of States to contribute to their clearance are recognized.

For Central America, the importance of the issue is not confined to the situation in our subregion alone, but extends to the situation in other regions, where the gravity and magnitude of the problem have dimensions that may be termed catastrophic. In this context, the initiative of introducing the item on the General Assembly's agenda and of considering the problem in depth at the global level in an effort to find better forms of coordinating our work and adopting measures to come to grips effectively with this issue — which has been described as an affront to all humanity — deserved and deserves our full support.

We have read with interest the Secretary-General's report (A/49/357 and Add.1). We wish to express our thanks and appreciation for its breadth and depth, which reflect the nature and extent of the problem of land-mines and other explosive devices buried during armed conflicts,

both domestic and international. It also portrays the tragedy of people who have suffered the effects or the potential innocent victims of these devices and, in general, their negative impact on society as a whole.

The human tragedy resulting from the existence of mine fields and their dimensions and impact on the life of a nation are bluntly reflected in the Secretary-General's report. In the words of the report, men, women and children who survive the explosion of the mine

"often lose at least one limb and often suffer additional muscular damage, damage to internal organs, blindness and the loss of testes...".
(A/49/357, para.4)

It is alarming that land-mines have killed or seriously injured over one million men, women and children over the past 20 years, most of them civilians. This prompts the conclusion that the real or potential threat of land-mines has become a global humanitarian problem that is even more difficult and tragic in developing countries that do not have the resources to implement full-scale programmes to reintegrate the injured into society.

Above and beyond constituting a threat to the life and integrity of persons, the existence of mine fields has an adverse impact in economic and social terms, including obstacles to the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes. This further impedes the process of reintegrating the injured into society, hamstringing the provision of basic services, and represents a serious obstacle in the way of economic development, particularly of activities aimed at rebuilding a country and humanitarian cooperation and peace-building activities undertaken by the United Nations in post-war periods.

The problem of mines and their impact on Central American society were addressed in the statement made by the Republic of Panama before the First Committee during the debate on the items relating to disarmament and international security. This statement dramatically highlighted the consequences of the explosion of such weapons, which bring death, injury and mutilation to civilians and particularly to innocent children and take a high human and economic toll. It stressed the price paid by Central Americans during the period of armed clashes as a focal point of the so-called cold war and a profitable market for the sale of mines.

The Organization of American States has established a mine-clearance programme for Central America. By its

resolution AG/1191 (XXII-1992), it also established a fund for contributions and pledges for countries wishing to cooperate in mine clearance. The process has made considerable strides with the assistance of our regional organization, the support of the Association for Democracy and Development, the Inter-American Defense Board and the cooperation of a number of donor States, members of the international community.

Against this backdrop, we welcome the fact that El Salvador has been able to declare the work of mine clearance ended, thanks not only to international assistance, but in large measure also thanks to the efforts and financing provided by the Government of El Salvador and the cooperation established between our Government, the political party *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* and the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador.

It should also be mentioned that the Government of Honduras has announced the initiation of a programme to clear mines placed during the past decade on the borders between Honduras and Nicaragua and between Honduras and El Salvador. The first phase, which will begin in the provinces of Olancho and El Paraíso, bordering on Nicaragua, will involve the cooperation of nationals of Guatemala, Brazil, Colombia and Honduras, who will be trained by United States experts in mine clearance. This programme, we learn unofficially, will be under the auspices of the regional organization, the OAS, which will invest \$1.5 million to remove almost 150,000 mines.

Despite these efforts, the Secretary General of the OAS has stated that to reactivate the process of mine clearance in Central America, the special fund will require some \$3,200,000 by the end of this year. This could cover acceleration of the mine clearance programme in Nicaragua, with the cooperation of the OAS and friendly countries, and, in the near future, involve de-mining activities along the Costa Rica-Nicaragua border and possibly in Guatemala, where the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees set in train in April this year a risk-reduction and training programme in the area where refugees are to be relocated.

We wish to emphasize that we Central Americans are deeply concerned at the gravity of the problem of minefields, whose proliferation and indiscriminate effects are an obstacle to the economic and social development of our region. The consequences of the problem of mines, described in detail in the report of the Secretary-General, "An Agenda for Development", deserve greater attention

and the resolve of the entire international community to eliminate them.

Faced with the need to strengthen and implement mine-clearance programmes, we exhort the members of the donor community to be generous in providing the necessary resources, particularly if they are convinced and understand that the problem has a human dimension, which is why international cooperation takes on a fundamentally human connotation.

Bearing in mind the experience Central America has gained in mine clearance, we think it important to make the following comments.

It is vital to have the assistance and full cooperation of all national sectors, and particularly of those parties directly involved in a conflict, to move along the process of mine clearance.

Non-governmental organizations, international agencies and private enterprises - particularly those with experience in mine clearance - should be invited to participate in such programmes.

We think there must be established, with the assistance of the relevant specialized body within the United Nations system, educational programmes to make people aware of the problem of mines. I am thinking particularly of children and of the inhabitants of rural areas who could be affected by the laying of mines.

It is necessary to promote among the parties directly involved in any conflict, a greater respect for humanitarian law, and in this instance to promote mapping of minefields, making it possible to locate mines in the post-conflict period, and facilitate clearance.

We are convinced that the problem of mines is not solely a matter of a lack of humanitarian ethics among the parties to any conflict. Rather, and perhaps to a greater degree, it concerns the ethics of those who produce and market them, particularly when they introduce more advanced technology, making mine-detection more difficult, while showing no interest in technological progress to make mine-detection easier in the post-conflict period.

We share the thinking of the Secretary-General, expressed in his report that I have mentioned, about the need to strengthen the capacity and coordination of the specialized bodies of the United Nations system, under

the general responsibility of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, to ensure a coherent, sustained and wide-ranging approach to the problem until it has been completely eliminated.

Bearing in mind financial limitations in Central America, we support the establishment of a voluntary trust fund, which we believe will, given its humanitarian nature, enjoy the support of the international community and in particular the industrialized countries, so that we may have the resources required to speed up progress in dealing with the serious problem of mine clearance. It is therefore important to stress that the situation in the world will worsen by the day, becoming more frustrating and discouraging, if we do not get new and additional resources for that purpose. As the Secretary-General's report points out:

"If the proliferation of land-mines were stopped in 1996, at current rates of funding and clearance it would still take almost 1,100 years to rid the world of the land-mines now in the ground." (A/49/357, para. 66)

We in the Central American countries fully support those countries that have already said the voluntary trust fund should be financed mainly by the countries that produce and export mines and by voluntary contributions by Member States.

On the basis of the experience gained in Central America, we do unhesitatingly recommend using regional organizations for mine clearance, an area in which we might strengthen ties of cooperation, although we feel that there must be close coordination with the world Organization as well.

I should like to put forward some additional recommendations that we consider might, in the short, medium and long term, help solve the problem of mines. During post-conflict periods humanitarian activities involved in United Nations peace-keeping and peace-building efforts should include mine-clearance programmes.

As a first step, we support the suspension of the export of anti-personnel land-mines; which pose an excessive threat to the civilian population, this measure might stem the rapid growth and proliferation worldwide of the problem of mines. We consider that the suspension should go beyond a limited moratorium on anti-personnel mines to cover suspension of production and export and to introduce transparency into the acquisition of such mines

and ancillary devices, leading to agreements that could result in the adoption of measures to end the use and proliferation of land-mines the world over.

Mindful of our humanitarian responsibility, the countries of Central America therefore call on countries that manufacture and export mines and transfer the technology for their production to declare a moratorium on those activities. This would make a substantial contribution to the attainment of the goals set out in the draft resolution before the Assembly. We appreciate the unilateral steps taken by Spain and by Italy, and hope that they will motivate other mine-producing countries to take similar action. In that connection, Central America would warmly welcome the inclusion in draft resolution A/49/L.8 of the amendment proposed by Honduras in document A/49/L.11 on the proclamation of a moratorium on the sale, export or any other transfer of anti-personnel mines until a new international regime regulating their import and production can be achieved. That provision would complement the First Committee's draft resolution the First Committee specifically on the export of anti-personnel mines.

We support the convening of an international review conference to amend the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects and, in particular, its Protocol II on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices.

We want the group of governmental experts established pursuant to resolution 48/79 to prepare the Convention review conference to be able as soon as possible to consider restrictions on the use of land-mines in internal conflicts, so as to make the Protocol broader and more effective in combating the proliferation and use of land-mines.

Apart from any progress in the adoption of measures and stipulations to regulate the matter of mines, we consider it important to set a code of conduct for the transfer of mines, especially for States that have not acceded to the Convention and its Protocol II, as proposed by the United Kingdom.

Bearing in mind that the problem of mines stems from the existence of internal and international armed conflicts and that most of these are in turn the result of factors touching on the economic and social structure of countries or of political, economic, strategic and

territorial disputes between States, we believe that at this stage of human development we should be more rational in our approach to world problems and international affairs.

On the domestic level, Governments — especially those of developing countries, where most conflict situations arise — should promote programmes for economic and social development that will address the root causes of despair, social tension and ultimately armed conflict. Internationally, Governments should encourage greater use of machinery for the peaceful settlement of conflicts, especially dialogue, direct negotiation and resort to international collective-security machinery, which would avoid confrontation and war between States.

If this proved possible, it would be a preventive measure that would avoid the quantitative and qualitative growth of the problem of mines, and would accord with the purposes of the Charter and the Secretary-General's "An Agenda for Peace" by implementing preventive measures for the maintenance of peace.

In conclusion, the countries of Central America reiterate our concern at the growing world-wide problem of mines, and especially at the human suffering it causes and the high social costs of the detonation of these devices. We fully support measures for the ultimate eradication of these concealed killers; we therefore support the draft resolution before the Assembly and are among its sponsors.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Last year, by adopting resolution 48/7 under the agenda item entitled "Assistance in mine clearance", the Assembly recognized the tremendous threat posed to human life by the millions of land-mines laid in a large number of countries. Owing to their lethal nature and collateral effects, land-mines cause untold suffering and misery to innocent civilians, including women and children. Moreover, land-mines invariably disrupt post-conflict social- and economic-development programmes in infested States. Indeed, the proliferation and laying of land-mines without reference to legitimate defence requirements sow the seeds of multifaceted agony and tragedy, ranging from an increased number of civilian casualties to ever-widening disruption of development programmes in infested States. Yet it is unfortunate to note that, in spite of this humanitarian disaster, the laying of land-mines continues unabated; as observed by the Secretary-General, 2 million more land-mines are being laid annually world wide.

My delegation noted with appreciation the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on

assistance in mine clearance, contained in document A/49/357. Although the report does not contain all-inclusive information about all mine-contaminated territories, including that of my country, it encompasses a meaningful examination of the global land-mine crisis and sets out workable recommendations and plans by whose implementing the issue at hand could, to a large extent, be addressed and its ensuing miseries alleviated.

The situation we are facing today as a result of land-mine use is a disastrous one. As observed by the Secretary-General in his report, the rapid proliferation of mines, together with the old-fashioned technology used in mine detection and clearance and the ever-increasing number of land-mines being laid annually worldwide, make the efforts of international community to address the global mine crisis a difficult and necessarily painstaking one.

My country has had bitter experience in this regard. During the Iran-Iraq war, nearly 16 million land-mines and unexploded sub-munitions were laid in my country, with a coverage of more than 4,000,300 hectares. Over the past five years we have succeeded in neutralizing and destroying 6 million mines without any access to documentation. However, it needs to be stressed that the mines laid in our once-occupied territories have taken huge expanses of our agricultural land out of production and rendered them uninhabitable. More important, every now and then innocent civilians living in those regions are killed, injured or maimed, which places a significant burden upon our society.

Based on our experience, I wish to stress that the magnitude of the task facing international community in the area of mine clearance makes strengthening of international cooperation in this regard all the more essential. According to the Secretary-General's report, one of the unique characteristics of the land-mine problem is that very few of the States in which conflicts have resulted in land-mine contamination produce land-mines themselves and that more than 85 per cent of all uncleared land-mines in those States were purchased or transferred from roughly 40 mine-producing States. Hence, there is a need for concerted efforts by the international community to rid the world of this plague. At the same time, the responsibility of those States that have laid mines in foreign territories in providing effective assistance and information, including maps and documentation of land-mines to the infested States, cannot be overlooked.

My delegation supports the proposal of the Secretary-General to establish a voluntary fund for assistance in mine clearance. Moreover, we view the establishment of a central database for the collection of global data on the land-mine problem in the Department of Humanitarian Affairs as a step in the right direction. We believe that all countries, and particularly those that have laid mines in foreign territories, must shoulder their responsibilities to provide this newly established mechanism with all necessary information with a view to accelerating national and international endeavours in the area of mine clearance.

Mr. Azwai (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like, at the outset, to inform the international community, through the United Nations General Assembly that the 26th of October is a day of mourning in my country. On 26 October, 1911, my country was the victim of a colonialist invasion by Italy, during which Italy incarcerated thousands of Libyans in concentration camps prior to sending them into exile on Italian uninhabited islands where most of them perished from hunger and disease. The problem of those exiles is one of the most important issues still pending between my country and Italy, in addition to the question of mines.

The magnitude and gravity of the problems caused by mines left in the soil of many countries are such that their effects cannot be dealt with effectively without stronger participation by the United Nations, which should also coordinate international activities in this area. It was on this basis that my country's delegation welcomed the inclusion in the agenda of the last session of the General Assembly of an item entitled "Assistance in mine clearance." We also supported resolution 48/7, adopted at that session, in the hope that that resolution and any other additional measures that may be taken in the future would give an impetus to the endeavours of the international community to address the mines problem, including the urgent implementation of the provisions of earlier resolutions wherein the General Assembly recognized the threats that such mines pose to the lives of individuals and their extremely harmful economic and social effects that arise from the fact that mines and other unexploded devices make it difficult for individuals to move about in safety, hamper the expansion of land reclamation activities and deprive the areas where they are laid of social advancement and economic development.

My delegation's concern over the problem of mines stems from an early awareness of the threats that those devices pose to man and nature alike. My country was the first to draw attention to the problem. Now that the world

has come to understand our concern, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is gratified by the increased international solidarity aimed at dealing with the mines problem. In addition, our deep concern over the question is due to the fact that the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is one of the countries that still face this serious problem, since Libya was a theatre of military operations during the Second World War, at which time the combatants laid millions of mines in its soil, along its coastline and in its territorial waters. When the belligerents departed, they left behind vast minefields and booby trapped areas which they did not care to clear, and have shown no readiness to help in clearing even through the provision of the maps needed for such clearance. Those mines are estimated to be in the millions as confirmed by a study prepared by a group of high-level United Nations experts and published in document A/38/383. That study stated that:

"in the various North African campaigns during the Second World War, for example, the Allied and the Axis forces laid many millions of such devices, mostly anti-tank mines. The estimates vary from some 5 million to as many as 19 million, according to different sources." (*A/38/383, annex, para. 7*)

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has suffered great losses as a result of the explosion of mines. There are no accurate or definitive estimates as to the size of those losses. However, a preliminary study prepared by specialized experts, whose statistics were included in our response to General Assembly resolution 48/7, estimated the number of dead at 5,670 and of those permanently injured at 4,935. Moreover, the mines killed 11,900 animals. Those estimates coincide with estimates in a study that has been published recently in a wide-circulation newspaper, which stated that:

"the mines buried in Libya since the Second World War have, through 1983, killed 4,000 persons and 12,000 animals."

Furthermore, the presence of the mines in Libya's soil has impeded efforts aimed at implementing development plans and the expansion of land reclamation, as is confirmed in a recent study, which states that:

"27 per cent of Libya's arable land is unusable because of the mines planted in it during the Second World War."

Over the years, the General Assembly has adopted many resolutions on war debris. These include resolutions 35/71, 36/188, 37/215, 38/162 and 39/167. All those resolutions have recognized the fact that clearance of war debris, including mines, is the responsibility of the countries that placed them and that such countries should provide adequate information and technical assistance towards their clearance, pay compensation for the losses and damage caused by them and pay for their removal and destruction. My country's delegation would like to take this opportunity to renew its support for those resolutions and to urge the General Assembly to take all necessary measures for their implementation. At the same time, my country's delegation believes that the General Assembly should determine the ways and means whereby we may achieve better international cooperation in removing and destroying mines, both old and new, because the continued presence of old mines is dangerous to human life and poses other dangers that are no less severe than those of more recent ones.

My country's delegation has studied the Secretary-General's report in document A/49/357. It is noteworthy that the report focused on special instances of the mines problem and, in particular, those resulting from internal conflicts over the past 20 years and their consequences. The report, however, does not mention the mines planted a long time ago, as in the case of those in my country's soil, which were planted over 50 years ago and which continue to cause the same suffering and wreak the same damage.

None the less, the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report to this session are welcomed by my country's delegation. We consider that the success of the United Nations system in translating those proposals into reality will depend on the cooperation of Member States in providing training, financial assistance and technical expertise to the affected countries, especially those which lack the necessary means and capabilities. This includes my country, which lacks the necessary expertise to clear the minefields planted in its territory during the Second World War.

Because the mines are spread over a wide area and are of different types, our capabilities for removing them are limited. Added to this is the lack of maps and documents identifying the location of minefields, which still constitute, on the one hand, a source of grave danger to human and animal life and, on the other, a central impediment to the implementation of economic and social development plans. The Libyan people, who have suffered

and continue to suffer because of a war that was fought on their soil and that brought down upon them a great deal of destruction and pain and many deaths and disabilities, look to the United Nations system to provide them with direct assistance to remove those mines and to support their requests to the countries that planted the mines to provide the relevant information, reports, assistance and technical expertise for that purpose.

In conclusion, I should like to say that we have noted that the draft resolution contained in document A/49/L.8 contains many positive elements. It does not, however, reflect some important concerns which we consider to be important. For this reason, my country's delegation spoke to the delegation of Germany which proposed to amendments that we hope will be accepted by the sponsors of the draft resolution so that it may be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Marrero (United States of America): Despite the efforts of the United States and other countries, the global anti-personnel land-mine problem is getting worse. The simple fact is that more land-mines are deployed in armed conflicts every year than are removed by mine-clearance personnel. Some 64 countries are now littered with an estimated 85 million to 110 million anti-personnel land-mines; 65 million, or approximately two thirds of these, have been laid since 1978. Tragically, anti-personnel land-mines maim or kill hundreds of innocent civilians every week.

The burden imposed by the proliferation and indiscriminate use of these weapons is beyond calculation. The world must take stronger steps to address this problem, and the United States intends to remain at the forefront of that effort.

The United States has long been involved in efforts to assist countries plagued with active, deployed land-mines left behind after the termination of a war. We support de-mining efforts in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Mozambique, where we have worked closely with the United Nations. We are also supporting de-mining efforts in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Namibia, Nicaragua, Honduras and Costa Rica. Significant land-mine problems also exist in Angola, Somalia, Liberia and Bosnia, but unrest in those countries has prevented the implementation of United States assistance.

In the last several years, the nature of the land-mine problem has changed dramatically. Some belligerents, especially in civil conflicts, began using land mines

indiscriminately as offensive weapons. Some also deployed long-lived mines in vast numbers, using new remote delivery systems. The total number of deployed land-mines jumped from many thousands to tens of millions. In short, the objective characteristics of the land-mine problem changed in fundamental ways.

Land-mines are a weapon of choice for many Government and insurgent groups. They are cheap, easy to manufacture and use, difficult to detect and expensive and dangerous to remove. Land-mines are easily exploited by adversary groups and sometimes are used as weapons of terror against civilian populations to generate fear, inhibit refugee repatriation, disrupt economic reconstruction and generally create chaos in fragile Governments.

It is all too common that combatants do not remove land-mines after a conflict ends. They are left for populations — and, more recently, peace-keepers — to deal with. Although international law requires records of minefields to be kept and measures to protect civilians to be taken, this is rarely done.

Addressing the horrible toll in innocent civilian casualties caused by the irresponsible and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel mines is a high priority of the Clinton Administration. Last month, in his speech before the United Nations, President Clinton proposed a first step towards the eventual elimination of anti-personnel land-mines. He proposed the negotiation of an anti-personnel-land-mine-control regime. This regime would restrict exports, production and stockpiles of anti-personnel land-mines.

While we recognize that anti-personnel land-mines are a legitimate weapon of war when used in accordance with the laws of armed conflict, we recognize also that their proliferation, coupled with widespread indiscriminate and irresponsible use, causes unnecessary human suffering. Ridding the world of these hidden killers would help save the lives of tens of thousands of men, women and innocent children in the years to come. Our ultimate goal is the eventual elimination of anti-personnel land-mines. We can move most effectively towards this goal as viable and humane alternatives are developed. We know this will take time.

In the interim, we are also seeking to strengthen Protocol II of the Convention on conventional weapons. The United States is pressing for substantial improvements to the land-mine Protocol, such as making it applicable to internal conflicts, requiring all mines to have a substantial

metallic content to facilitate post-conflict detection, requiring that unmarked and unmonitored minefields employ only self-destructing/self-deactivating mines and establishing effective verification procedures.

In addition to these initiatives, we continue to call on all States to adopt moratoriums on the export of anti-personnel land-mines until a more permanent regime can be put in place. In October 1992 the United States adopted a unilateral export moratorium on anti-personnel land-mines. This moratorium was extended in 1993 for three years. I am pleased to note that in December 1993 the General Assembly unanimously adopted a United States-sponsored resolution, similar to our current draft resolution, calling for moratoriums on exports of land-mines that pose grave dangers to civilians. To date, 17 countries have adopted moratoriums on the export of anti-personnel land-mines. Three others have export controls which serve as the equivalent of an export moratorium.

This draft resolution on assistance in land-mine clearance is clearly complementary to United States initiatives. Urgent and comprehensive action is necessary to address this tragic humanitarian problem. If our goal is to reduce innocent civilian casualties caused by anti-personnel land-mines, we must address both land-mines already emplaced and future controls on these weapons.

Mine-clearance assistance programmes are urgently needed to clean up this deadly debris of war, which is perhaps the world's most lethal form of pollution. Simultaneously, we must reverse the patterns of proliferation and indiscriminate use that are causing this horrible problem.

I applaud the United Nations for its action, and I am pleased to announce that the United States, as an original co-sponsor, fully supports this draft resolution on assistance in mine clearance.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to inform delegations that the Assembly will take up agenda item 11, "Report of the Security Council", on Monday, 31 October 1994, in the afternoon instead of tomorrow, 26 October 1994, as originally scheduled.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.